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CLERICAL POLITICS

IN THE

Methodist Episcopal Church.

PREFACE.

There are Methodists who speak in the most despairing terms of the condition of affairs in our church; they see no hope of reforming Methodism except by such revolutionary measures as would be almost destructive. They declare that "clerical politics" and "ecclesiastical politics" are terms far too mild; that *clerical Jesuitism* would be better. That while the Inquisition is not in the hands of those who wish to defeat an opposing candidate, yet slander and falsehood are, and that they are used for the evilest of political purposes. This latter charge we unfortunately know to be true.

It is claimed, too, that fraud of the most reprehensible kind is resorted to when other means are likely to fail. And this is true in at least one instance, which four years ago was brought to the attention of our Conference by our beloved resident bishop. And yet the outside world should know that among the sixteen thousand of our preachers only a fraction — a small fraction — has this leprosy of political lust upon them. The vast majority of our ministers would not do a mean thing for the highest office on earth, either in church or state. The great mass of our laity, too, are pure. Despair must not be allowed to palsy our efforts.

Under a new organization, *The Guild of Reformers of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, soon will be enrolled such numbers as will bring to an end the reign and tyranny of the "clerical politician."

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MR. PRESIDENT AND BRETHREN, — In discussing a subject involving existing institutions, there are two extremes to be avoided: On the one hand an ill-nature that is overcaptious, that can see no good, predicting as an outcome nothing but disaster; and, on the other hand, an over good nature, like that of an aged grandmother, who, somewhat demented, is, therefore, deaf and blind to the frailties and even iniquities of her descendants, simply because they are hers. Between these two extremes is a healthful condition of mind that is generous in its appreciation of what is meritorious, but has no hesitation in applying caustics when they are needed.

The limitations of our subject, as you may infer, exclude from the discussion the doctrines of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and, largely, the administration of both its discipline and its ritual, attention being confined chiefly to its government and incidentally to its temporal economy.

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*An address by THORNTON TOWNSEND, delivered, by request, before the Boston Preachers' Meeting.

will be noticed, too, that our subject, "Clerical ...itics," calls for no words as to the responsibilities ...d participation of the laity in the administration of ...ur church affairs, which would be the case if our subject were "Ecclesiastical Politics," but confines the discussion exclusively to the clergy. The reasons for this limitation are, first, that we do not wish to undertake too much in one address; and, second, that while the laity may not be above criticism in some particulars, yet their mistakes have been so few comparatively as for the present to call for no public mention. And we may add that if the clergy were free from political craft and taint, the laymen hardly would be tempted to wrongdoing in the matters of church government.

That there must be politics and clerical politics of some sort in the management of the Methodist Episcopal Church will be apparent when its make-up is considered, for it is a composite organization, being not purely democratic — indeed, not so purely democratic, perhaps, as it should be — and not purely monarchical, but combining both forms, involving in its democracy to a very considerable extent the representative element. These opposite characteristics, the representative-democratic and the monarchical, are found to play important parts in the administration of our church affairs. In the election of officers, from the highest to the humblest, our church is democratic, though doing its work largely through representatives; nor is this in itself to be considered an evil, for a democracy having worthy representatives is one of the best forms of government when the people and their representatives are what they

should be, though one of the worst forms when the people and their representatives are not what they should be. On the other hand, in making appointments to official positions when the appointments are limited to pulpit and parish work, our church theoretically is an absolute monarchy; nor is such a monarchy objectionable when those in authority are self-sacrificing, wise, and holy men ruling the church in the love and fear of God.

Now, though there are in Methodism these apparently antagonistic elements, we do not hesitate to say — and we think that no person who has made anything like a careful study of our Methodist church government and polity will dissent from the opinion — that, all things considered, no other form of Protestant church government on earth, in efficiency and comprehensiveness, equals ours when in the hands or under the control of wise, unselfish, and sanctified men. But it also must be confessed, by all excepting those who are very blind, that no other form of Protestant church government is exposed to greater, if to so great, corruptions, injustices, and downright cruelties as is that of the Methodist Episcopal Church when in the hands or under the control of unwise, selfish, and unsanctified men. So long, therefore, as the clerical politician disdains self-aggrandizement, seeking solely the safety and prosperity of the church to which he belongs, giving his voice and his vote for the exclusive purpose of putting into places of authority and influence the fittest and best men who are eligible to those places, he is an important and indispensable factor in the successful working of our

church polity, meriting not the censure, but the praise, of all God's children. Such a minister is an honorable representative of what, primarily, the term clerical politician means. He may properly be called a church statesman.

But when a Methodist minister uses his time and energies in securing partisan victories; when he thinks more of personal emoluments than of the welfare of the church; when in seeking official positions he crowds against others, and resorts to the measures and tricks used by corrupt ward politicians, then he is a clog in our church machinery, meriting whatever of disdain righteous men cast upon him. Such a minister is a typical representative of what, in the process of years, the term clerical politician has come to mean, and it is in this degenerate sense that the term will be employed henceforth in this address.

That the clerical politician has unusual temptations and opportunities in our church to do his unholy work, there is no question. Perhaps, all things considered, the wonder is that there have been so few, comparatively, who have yielded, though tempted. Honorable, responsible, and even lucrative offices have been, and, we may say, are now as perhaps never before, at the disposal of the Methodist Church, and are such as make their appeal to the ambition and cupidity of some, to the vanity of others, and to the selfishness of nearly all. In no other Protestant denomination in this country, we think we are safe in saying, is there so great exposure to the ecclesiastical corruptions as in the Methodist Church. So great is it that, unless care is

exercised, unworthy and unholy men soon will be attracted to our church, not to benefit it, but to eat of its abundant loaves and fishes; while worthy men, seeing the methods that are employed, and, unfortunately, that are successful in securing official position, and disdaining to use these ignoble measures themselves, will be alienated, and then will abandon our communion. Without the exercise of vigilance we shall gain, therefore, the worst types of church membership and lose the best.

Now, in view of the democratic element in our church government, which is especially prominent in all elections, and in view of the monarchical element, which is especially prominent in all appointments, and, further, in view of the temptations that appeal constantly to unsanctified human nature, which from apostolic times has been in strife concerning the question of who shall be accounted greatest (Luke 22: 24), and still further, in view of the fact that some of our clergymen who are successful in gaining positions of importance and authority are not supremely wise, entirely unselfish and wholly sanctified, there is forced upon us the fact that our church is quite in the way of contracting a very offensive, if not fatal, malady, and of meriting in consequence sooner or later the curse of God. At least there is so much of peril impending that our people must no longer close their eyes or seal their lips or fold their arms. The remedy for this malady is not suppression through silence, but exposure through the fullest publication. The safety of our church, like the safety of our republican form of government, depends on *agitation*. And

one would better err on the side of too much agitation rather than on that of too little.

In saying these things, my brethren, I am not a mere alarmist, for I am not hopeless; nor am I a solitary prophet of evil, for there are many thoughtful people among us, laymen as well as clergymen, who have been watching with great and increasing anxiety what seems to them to be in our church affairs, mischiefs that already are damaging its vitality and usefulness. Were this not the case, I am sure there would have been from the East and the West, from the North and the South, no such ready response as was given to the request made last year by the editor of *Zion's Herald* for an expression of opinion respecting the evils of Ecclesiastical Politics; nor would there have been any pertinency in this question of one of our bishops in a sermon before the late Ecumenical Conference, "Is the lust of ecclesiastical preferment in the disguise of a holy zeal eating, as doth a cancer, at the vitals of the church, and is there nothing better and greater than office?"

Our subject at this point naturally divides itself into three parts: *First*, What are some of the specific mischiefs wrought at the hands of clerical politicians? *Second*, What probably will be the results if these mischiefs continue unchallenged and unrebuked? *Third*, What remedies can be applied to overcome these mischiefs, and what agencies can be used to convert, or, if that is impossible, to annihilate, the whole brood of clerical politicians which are both a disgrace and a curse to the Methodist Episcopal Church.

I.

In treating the first part of our subject, you will pardon us if we are somewhat specific, so much so as to enable you to identify some of the representations as occurrences that actually have taken place under your personal observation. While this method of treatment is likely to be not altogether agreeable, and doubtless will provoke resentment, nevertheless it is quite sure, on the whole, to be in the end the most serviceable.

A remark on this point, made by ex-Governor Evans, of Colorado, who greatly deplores the evils of clerical politics, and who thoroughly knows of what he speaks, having been a member of every General Conference since 1872, will have weight. "It seems to me that our clerical friends," he says, "generalize too much, both in describing the evil and in proposing its remedy. In fact, the exposition of the evil is so general that it identifies no one, and the guilty can heartily endorse the condemnation with emphasis."

We are aware, however, that there is no little difficulty in catching the guilty parties, for more frequently than otherwise they wear the guise of the utmost innocency; they are among the last to acknowledge that they have done anything out of the way, or anything not meant for the highest interests of the church, which they pretend unselfishly to serve. The difficulty is that clerical politicians, like those in civil affairs, are often adroit, and have "ways of gaining their ends which are rather suspected than known.' But to be as charitable as the case will allow, we may say that possibly some of our ministers are self-deceived, thinking that they are

doing God's service in promoting their own personal interests, and feeling that their election or appointment to office is really indispensable to the highest prosperity of the church. Ex-Governor Evans draws a very excellent portrait of the ordinary office-seeking clerical politician: —

> Your "ecclesiastical politician" takes high ground; he is not a candidate, but is, nevertheless, industrious in all the means generally used. His friend (doubtless with his full knowledge and consent) is urging his claims for promotion by letter and personal solicitation with every one who may have a voice in his election or influence in that connection. While at the Annual Conference he works for the election to General Conference of such delegates as will support his friend for episcopal or other honors by many of the arts known to secular politics. Many good men fall into line, not suspecting its impropriety. Still our "ecclesiastical politician" is not a candidate, and witho it hesitation asserts that he is doing nothing looking to his election. . . . Have we not seen this operation repeated time and again, and can any member of a General Conference fail to recognize individual members of the class? And after a whole session's efforts the defeated candidates assure their friends that they have not been working for an election; that they have never asked any one to vote for them. Thus they deceive themselves; but the whole thing is too transparent to deceive anybody else.

My brethren, is it not a mortifying shame that one of the most distinguished laymen in our church, and one of the stanchest friends of Methodism, is compelled to make such humiliating confessions! But it is fortunate that a layman has made them, for certainly his motives will not be impeached or questioned, as those of a clergyman might be, and his words must show even to the most unsuspecting that corruption exists in our church as a fact and not merely in the imagination of some constitutional clerical pessimist. They show also that

no little difficulty is encountered when we are on the point of saying, and while feeling we ought to say, to some guilty brother, "*Thou art the man!*"

Perhaps at this point as well as elsewhere, we may quote from a few of those who love our church ardently, who have spoken conscientiously, and for the purpose of arresting the scheming practices of which some of our ministers unquestionably are guilty.

Under the heading, "Methodist Ecclesiastical Politics," an editor of one of our church papers employs this language: "In the editor's extensive travels over our land to become personally acquainted with our aggressive Methodism, it was discovered that this one painful characteristic [clerical politics] of our church-life filled loyal Methodists with chagrin and foreboding."

Now, if this is a correct representation of the facts in the case, it becomes every loyal Methodist not to resort longer to the "hush-up business," but without an hour's delay to speak out, and then to stamp out whatever of evil is threatening to bring a shadow upon the fair name of Methodism. Such a course, we are sure, will meet general approval; any other course will be looked on with suspicion. Winking at an increasing evil, except in times of total ignorance (Acts 17: 30), is a short-sighted policy. And judging from what we hear, the winking, however vigorous, will not avail much in hiding the existing mischiefs of clerical politics in our church, for already they are more generally known and commented on than most of us imagine.

A clergyman in one of the New York Conferences, a man who, we are assured, is loyal to our church and of

high standing in it, writes these words which have received wide publicity: "Every year the evidence increases that our great church is threatened by the politician seeking his own. We know of no well-informed minister, except the man who seeks to cover his tracks by denial, who does not at times express his anxiety upon this matter."

Again we say, if any occasion exists for such expressions as these, loyal Methodists should not resort to protestations or denials, but make to the world an honest confession of existing guilt, and then seek with all earnestness to bring about an immediate reform. Such a course is the most manly one, it will bring the speediest relief, and gain for the church far larger credit than the quiet method that the more conservative class among us would recommend.

A Boston clergyman, formerly a Methodist, at present a Congregationalist, who has had rare opportunities for knowing of what he says, told your speaker within a few weeks that Methodist people would be surprised if they knew what he knows of the widespread irritation and unrest in the minds of many of our ministers. He has a file of confidential letters from Methodist ministers under appointment in different Conferences and States of the Union, inquiring as to what openings and opportunities Congregational churches can offer to a Methodist preacher, and as to what steps are to be taken when one desires to leave the Methodist ministry and become a Congregationalist. This clergyman further said that our Methodist people would be startled if they knew the names of some of these applicants for work in the

Congregational Church. Not one of this number, we were assured, is an ordinary preacher, while some of them now are filling the best pastoral appointments our church can give.

But the significant fact to be noted is this, that, with scarcely an exception, according to our brother's representations, these preachers have been annoyed out of all patience with the maneuvrings and the successes of clerical politicians. They are not tired of the doctrines or the ritual of Methodism; they are not impatient under its itinerancy as now arranged, but they are downright sick with what they have been compelled to see at more than one Annual and General Conference.

We can and ought to say, to the credit of this Congregational clergyman, who is still a stanch friend of our Church and who rejoices in her prosperity, that he never has used his influence to persuade any of these disaffected men to leave the Methodist ministry for that of his denomination. His reply to them uniformly has been: "I can offer no inducements: nor can I advise you. When your connection with the Methodist Church is actually severed, I shall be glad to talk with you and act the part of a friend."

Lest some one should be led to think that this is a one-sided representation of our condition, let us give you the words of another Congregational clergyman, formerly a Methodist, a graduate from the Ohio Wesleyan University, and not long since a graduate also from Boston University School of Theology, who from his large acquaintance with Methodists has been in the way of being to some of them a sort of father-confessor.

In a note of recent date he used these words: "Again and again Methodist ministers from different parts of the West have written me protesting against the slavery of their position, and asking how they might gain their freedom; and even ministers who intend to live and die in the Methodist Church have confessed to me their abhorrence of the evils which every Methodist preacher has knowledge of, but which few have sufficient courage publicly to denounce."

Some one, perhaps, would remark at this point, were there opportunity, that our people do not care for the testimony of these Congregational clergymen. But why not, if they state facts, are kindly disposed, and are competent witnesses? If, however, it would be more satisfactory, we will call for witnesses a few Methodists who are in every way loyal to our church and its discipline.

A Methodist preacher of eminence writing from the Pacific coast under the heading, "Ecclesiastical Politics," speaks thus: "It is a naked and unlovely fact that arts too low for Christians and such as politicians possessed of a shred of manhood could hardly stoop to, are sometimes employed in the heat of a canvass." These words certainly have the merit of unqualified frankness and plainness.

A Methodist preacher in one of our Western Conferences, whose standing we are assured is among the first, after having applied certain severe epithets to clerical politicians, justifies their use thus: —

It may be objected that such expressions as "Conference bosses," "ecclesiastical politicians," "ministerial wire-pullers," etc., are too harsh to be applied to ministers of the gospel. I wish there were harder and more contemptuous terms to be used. Of all the politicians that infest the land, ecclesiastical politicians are the most unscrupulous and dangerous, the most hypocritical, unfair, and demoralizing in methods. Ecclesiastical politics is the greatest evil our Methodist Episcopal system has to fear.

Now, my brethren, on second thought, it would seem that few things would be more unmanly or hazardous, if we desire renovation, than lightly to esteem these words spoken in all kindness by those who are looking upon our church both from without and from within its communion. The fitting response on our part is not a sneer which we might be tempted to give, but an expression of gratitude for the interest manifested by those who have gone out from us, and for the frankness of those who are still of our number.

But you will bear with us while attempting to make a more thorough analysis of the matter before us and while pointing out more specifically the workings of clerical politics. For if one is to agitate at all, one would better make a business of it, and if in consequence one is to suffer martyrdom, which is quite likely to be the case, it may as well be for much as for little.

In confining attention for a few moments to the Annual Conference, we may say that in some respects its most important factor is its cabinet, which is composed of the presiding bishop and the presiding elders of the various districts.

Few corporate bodies in our church require greater wisdom, few have committed to them graver trusts, but trusts that easily can be prostituted to greed and selfishness. In this cabinet the temptations come

especially to presiding elders. In saying that some of these brethren are unselfish, pious, and hard-working men, is saying only what all know to be true. On the other hand, in saying that some of their number, while claiming to be seeking the glory of God, are working with an eye to their personal interests, is making public only what nearly every preacher in every Conference feels to be true.

But lest we may seem to be assuming too much personal responsibility in these statements, allow us to quote the following words that already have had circulation far and near: —

> There are Methodists who make bold to intimate that the presiding eldership has been made a nucleus of a very lively and potent form of ecclesiastical politics. To be out-and-out, who doubts that the large proportion of presiding elders in the General Conference is due to "politics"? Who doubts that, as a rule, the presiding elder is elected a delegate through the power of his position rather than through the power of his personality? It is most noticeable that when presiding elders step back into the ranks of the pastorate, they are seldom thought of as the most intellectually and spiritually representative men of the Conference. Complaints are heard against the favoritism of certain presiding elders who appoint their men and man their appointments with an eye to the reciprocity feature of ecclesiastical politics. It is said that presiding elders have been known to "remember" their "political" friends, and to "pay back" their political opponents. Whether justly or not, hints have been expressed that two presiding elders have, on occasion, found it profitable to pool their issues, and for each to "deliver" his district to the other, and for both thereby to enjoy the honors of election.

Everybody must admit that if there are really no grounds for these implications and insinuations, they are slanderous and should be suppressed. But who doubts that in some cases they could be converted into direct assertions?

From the Conference cabinet and its constituents let us next consider the Annual Conference itself. We quote and gladly concur in the sentiment of ex-Governor Evans, to whom reference already has been made, and we are sure his words will find a hearty response in all your hearts: "The Annual Conferences are generally composed of good, pious, unsuspicious ministers, who are not ambitious for higher offices, but for greater usefulness, and are ready to prefer one another." While these words are kind and charitable, they leave ample room, as you notice, for the additional statement that some of the members of our Annual Conferences are "suspected men," and have been "ambitious for higher offices."

While speaking of the election of delegates to General Conference, the following rather unsavory comments are made by a preacher of eminence in one of our New England Conferences; and it should be borne in mind that these words already have had a very wide circulation: —

> Now and then strong and good men have a sufficient hold on their Conferences to ensure their election in spite of the ring; but in quite too many instances able men are shelved and mere ciphers put forward. How surprising that some men reach the General Conference and that better ones are left at home! Once in the General Conference, they are mere tools of the bosses, often more concerned in arranging the electoral card than in promoting good legislation. Often the men they elect are as great a surprise to the public as those they leave out. . . . Not a few of the methods of these tacticians surprise us by their exhibitions of cheek, assurance, and insensibility to the proprieties of associate life. What can you say of secret combinations to secure the election of one or more of the circle to office? What of securing the pledges of preachers beforehand to vote their ticket? What think you of an

aspirant to high General Conference honors who should visit the ministers at their homes before Conference and endeavor to secure their pledges to vote for him as a delegate? What of the independence of a preacher who gave the pledge and redeemed it in his election? . . . . What of a Conference ring which should undertake to fill every influential office and pulpit with its members? What of a ring-master, with the episcopal bee in his bonnet, who should travel from his place in a distant Conference to be at every special gathering through a quadrennium? Worst of all, these methods go to the General Conference in the shape of lobbies and combinations against which, more than once, an outcry has been raised on the General Conference floor.

At this point, too, we cannot refrain from saying that if the author of these words speaks without occasion, hiding his personality by withholding his name, and using the interrogation point as a provisional defense or retreat, knowing there are no grounds for charges and specifications, his name should be demanded and a prosecution should be instituted.

Unfortunately, these charges are not confined to the Eastern sections of our country. A Methodist of high standing in one of our Western Conferences, writing on the perils of our church, speaks thus: —

The Annual Conference preceding the General Conference is coming to be a wire-pulling campaign. Electioneering paralyzes business; preachers are at it; college presidents and professors are at it; editors and secretaries are at it; and presiding elders hardly escape the contagion. And, with the marked exception of the *candidates* for General Conference, the brethren seem to lose their spiritual tone. If it were not for the extraordinary piety and prayerfulness of the *candidates*, the religious life of the Conference would be utterly demoralized. It has been known to take a Conference four years to recover from this demoralization caused by the envyings and strife of ambitious ecclesiastical politicians.

These are not your speaker's words, or his irony as

to the piety of the candidates, but are the words of one who has had larger opportunities than most of us for making observations. If, however, these two writers and others already quoted have no grounds for their damaging statements, they deserve, we repeat, our unqualified condemnation. But who is so much of a child among us as to suppose that these brethren would have made these charges without reason? And we may go further and say that any member of either of our New England Conferences (to speak within bounds) who has seen nothing of the procedures suggested, is so innocent that he is almost an idiot, or else year after year he has had a Conference cushion of such softness placed under him that the fluff from it has injured his eyesight.

But let us now pass from the Annual to the General Conference. This is a great and a powerful body in Methodism. It is both the law maker and the supreme court of our church, and from its hands are dispensed many and important offices. It is a body in which one might expect to find great learning, fearless advocacy of righteous measures, fervent piety, the noblest and purest of men, the truest and most laborious of Christians. And no one questions the statement that such men have been found in every General Conference since our church was organized. Nor does any one question the presence there, in late years, of an entirely different class of men. The feeling has been more than once expressed that men have been sent to the General Conference who, if not a disgrace, certainly have not been an honor to it or to the Annual Conferences that sent them. Allow us to verify this state-

ment with the published words of one who has been familiar with the personal make-up of more than one General Conference: —

> Here in this great legislative body are men who are the worst of advisers, the weakest of debaters (*vox et prætetea nihil*), the shabbiest of Christians, the ignoblest of men. Here are the fanciful, the faithless, the formal. Here are the heady, the office-hunting, the self-adoring, whose breath is poisonous, and their spirit perversive. That their numbers are not relatively great is gladly conceded; but their influence is harmful far beyond their numerical strength. A jewel in a swine's snout is a malplacement which shocks the sense of fitness. How, then, about a swine's snout in a heap of jewels? One might be endured, and two not prove fatal; but a dozen or so would dim the luster of the biggest and brightest heap of gems that ever laughed in the face of the sun.

But this is not all. It has been reported and published abroad that the floors of the General Conference more than once have witnessed the formation of combinations under the skillful management of a few astute ecclesiastical demagogues who have carried measures that never ought to have been carried. To be sure, our best men have refused to enter these combinations, but others who at home have a reputation for good judgment and piety, without a careful enough scrutiny and without weighing consequences, voluntarily have entered the combine and have become parties to its various schemes, while still others unwittingly have been drawn in and then have brushed the clothes and blacked the boots of self-seeking men without knowing it.

To be perfectly outspoken, let us ask what piece of ecclesiastical business can be imagined more disreputable than the marshaling of voters by the agency of an

unsanctified combination for the express purpose of electing one or more of its members to the episcopacy?

With no little surprise some unsuspecting person may ask, "Has this ever been done?" We are sorry to say, if all reports are true, that the historian will not have to go back into the mythical ages of Methodism to find a General Conference in which three or four of its self-constituted candidates pooled their interests, and by this low scheme actually were elected to the highest position in the great Methodist Episcopal Church. If this is true, and if such business ever is repeated, and if the guilty parties the next hour after their election are not impeached, one may well lose one's faith in the polity and government in the Methodist Church. A single combination of this sort may not wreck the church, but if winked at and repeated, the church is doomed!

And this is not all. A preacher of large observation in our Southern work, himself a worker in that field, speaking of the use that has been made of the colored delegates to General Conference, says: "The prejudices of the negroes in the church have been appealed to; their obligations to candidates, in view of certain sentiments, or services in their behalf, have been urged; worse than this, the ambition of the colored leaders has been stimulated."

Nor is this all. "It is notorious," says one of our leading preachers, "that often in recent years the attempt has been made to put the colored men into the scales in a heap to decide by balance of power the light-weight office-seeker's fortunes."

Are such procedures in the General Conference possible? Or is it supposable that these brethren fully realized at the time what they were doing? If these charges are true, I know you will agree with your speaker when saying that nothing which properly falls under the word politics, civil or ecclesiastical, national, state or municipal, even when controlled by a rum-Irish-Roman Catholic democracy, or by Tammany rings, can be more despicable in the sight of heaven than this degradation and prostitution of ecclesiastical prerogatives under the pretense of rendering sanctified service to the church and to God.

II.

But we cannot longer dwell on this division of our subject; therefore, in the second place, let us take a few moments of your time in calling attention to some of the consequences that are likely to follow unless clerical politics and clerical politicians are put out of the way.

And, first, unless there is reform, the day is not far distant when there will be a dearth among us of large-minded and large-hearted laymen. As you are aware, large numbers of our lay membership, together with those whose family connections are Methodistic, year after year quietly have withdrawn from our churches and congregations, passing into those of other denominations. Various reasons for this exodus, such as pride, an aristocratic fever, and a desire for freedom from disciplinary requirements, are offered. But who does not

know that some of these laymen have left our church because of the existence in it of clannish and political combinations; because their judgment as to church management has been overruled without reason; because poor pulpit talent has been forced upon them, though desirable men could have been provided; because the democratic element in our church is still too much restricted; and because through the agency of degrading political methods they have seen men elevated to the highest ecclesiastical positions who relatively were not qualified for those positions and who never would have reached them except through the agency of these same bad measures and methods? These laymen, not desiring the notoriety that would come from agitation, discussion, and protestation, have preferred without publicity to withdraw their support and membership. And we know of other laymen, not a few, who more than once have been at the point of doing likewise. Men of this class we cannot afford to lose, but we shall lose them unless there is a change in the management of our church affairs.

Another of the consequences of clerical politics, we may rest assured, is precisely what Dr. Horr and Mr. Jefferson, the Congregational clergymen above referred to, have stated as already existing, namely, the creating and fostering of a purpose on the part of many of our ministers to sever, when a favorable opportunity presents itself, their connection from a church that allows these abuses of holy trusts year after year to go on uncorrected and unchallenged.

But there is nothing of any amount in this regard to

fear, some enthusiastic brother affirms. Is there not? One of our prominent Methodist preachers in the State of Michigan, who has had more than ordinary opportunities for knowing of what he says, gave assurance within a few months that upwards of a score of prominent Methodist ministers personally known to him recently have left our church for churches of other denominations chiefly on account of their disgust at the unministerial, if not despicable, measures employed by our clerical politicians. Taking our country through and through, there certainly is something to fear.

In this connection you will allow me to say that the chair I have the honor of occupying in our School of Theology has afforded excellent opportunities for obtaining an insight into the thoughts and hearts of our young preachers. Year after year the instruction given under the heading, "The Pastor and the Annual Conference," has been this: "Under all ordinary circumstances the pastor should place himself in the hands of the church authorities and await in silent submission the determination of the bishop and his cabinet, thus conforming to the requirements of our Discipline" (see "Negotiations between Preachers and People," Disc. 1888, Appendix, ¶24).

But these directions are sure to awaken discussion, which is usually closed with these words by the professor: "Brethren, if you have a holy ambition for large fields of usefulness, you will reach them sooner, at least you will remain in them longer, by leaving all ecclesiastical manipulations, ministerial diplomacy, or wire-pulling to others, devoting yourselves faithfully to pulpit and

parish work, committing all your ways the while to God, who careth for you." Year after year the students make this reply: "Professor, you are right theoretically; but if we merely attend to our pulpit and parish work, no matter with what faithfulness, while others are engaged in pulling the wires, we shall be left far behind." And judging from the past, so far as *official recognition* is concerned, are not these young men right in their conclusion? At least these students more than once have surprised their professor by their acquaintance with the methods and successes of clerical politicians in preventing others from advancing and in securing for themselves ecclesiastical appointments and promotions.

At this point we are almost forced to remark on one or two matters which have occasioned more hesitation on our part than has anything else in this address, and chiefly because in their discussion there seems to be no way of evading or suppressing the personal element. And yet it is possible, before we are through, you may feel that what is about to be said should have been spoken months, if not years, ago.

As you are aware, several among the best of our Boston Theological School graduates — the best, we mean, in piety as well as in scholarship and preaching ability — have left our church and have gone into other denominations. In explanation it has been charged that a certain professor in that school has been at the bottom of this disloyalty, and by his personal influence has alienated these students from the Methodist fold.

Now you will agree with us that if there are reason-

able grounds for these charges they should be published, and that professor should be removed from his position without delay; and more than that, why should he not be branded as an ecclesiastical traitor?

The members of the New England Conferences will bear witness that, up to this moment, no word has been spoken publicly in justification of the professor who is under criticism, or in reply to the charges, or in condemnation of the unbrotherly use that has been made of these charges, as political capital; nor would mention now be made of these matters except from the fact that the school has been traduced far and near, and should be defended; and that within a few weeks, in a somewhat public way, this tendency of our theological students to pass into other denominations has been brought anew to the attention of our church authorities; and, further, that the real occasion of this exodus needs to be made known, as it has a bearing on the matter now under discussion.

On the 19th of December last a letter was received from President W. F. Warren by the professor to whom allusion has been made, in which, while speaking of a late meeting of the New England Education Society, held Dec. 10, these words were used: "There were present, besides clerical and lay managers, two bishops and another representative of the church at large, Dr. C. H. Payne. During the course of the meeting two addresses were made, one by a bishop, which reflected very damagingly on our theological faculty and school. I hope you can send me such a statement of your ideas and attitude and attempted influence with respect to

this whole subject of holding our students loyally to our church as shall enable me to convince these critics of the injustice of their damaging reflections upon the school."

The reply of the professor to whom this letter was addressed contained these words: "I am sorry for the annoyance that has come to you, but personally I am gratified more than I can tell you that the charges to which you refer have been made, and that an issue is now fairly before us. And what seems at this juncture especially providential is that I am appointed, without any seeking on my part, to read before the Preacher's Meeting an essay which will give me an opportunity of bringing to light certain matters, and will save you the trouble of becoming my apologist. As I do not know to which Bishop you refer, will you kindly forward the enclosed letter to him?" The enclosed letter to the Bishop is the following: —

BOSTON, Dec. 21, 1891.

HONORED AND DEAR BISHOP: I am in receipt of a letter from Dr. Warren which gives a partial account of the recent meeting of the New England Education Society. The Doctor says that an address was made by one of the Bishops reflecting "very damagingly on our theological faculty and school." If the Doctor is right in his conjecture that I am a guilty party, will you have the kindness to write me as early as possible what your specific charges are, what your evidence is, and who your informers are?"

On the day of the sending of these letters, one to President Warren and the other to the then unknown Bishop, a circular letter was addressed to those of the "disloyal graduates" whose residence is near Boston, asking if the influence of the accused professor in any way had caused them to leave the Methodist ministry, and

also asking if they were willing to state whether clerical politics had anything to do in their alienation from Methodism. There are only four of these men who have remained in New England, who are prominent and unusually promising.* The first of this number to enter the Congregational ministry, we may say, was a brilliant scholar while in our school, and was recognized by all the professors, in every way, as one of our foremost men. He is now enjoying a remarkably successful pastorate in a Congregational Church in a city adjoining Boston. As soon as the fact came to be known that this student was to leave the Methodist ministry, or rather was not to enter it, our accused theological professor called the attention of two of our presiding elders to the facts in the case, urging that he should be seen without delay. We are sorry to say that these officials were too indifferent, or too busy, even to enter into conversation with this student. To be sure, their seeing him might have made no difference in his plans, but it would have shown a personal interest. And is not the showing of personal and official interest in young men who are on the threshold of our ministry a legitimate part of the presiding elder's mission in the world?

On the day following the sending of the circular letter, a reply was received from the preacher of whom we are speaking, from which we quote the following words bearing on the matter in hand:—

> Never from a boy did I feel at home in the Methodist Church, and the day on which I decided to preach the gospel was the day on which I decided to sever my relations with Methodism. My open abandonment of Methodism was simply the culmination of a purpose which had been silently forming through many years.

* See page 96

> Just what made me so un-Methodistic it would be difficult to say. Several facts deserve consideration. I was born with a democratic soul which chafes under the restraints of monarchy; and even from a boy I could not understand how men of independent soul could submit to the dictatorship of bishops and presiding elders. I was told that these dignitaries were divinely guided in their official actions, but on that point I was exceedingly skeptical.
>
> While a student at Delaware, O., I was honored with the intimate friendship of several members of the faculty, and caught glimpses of things "behind the scenes" which it is not lawful for me to tell in public. Delaware, on account of its ecclesiastical position, offers special opportunities to one who wishes to study Methodist machinery, and in four years I learned all I wanted to know. I had seen the "inside" of Methodist politics, and that was enough.
>
> On coming to Boston to study law, I found myself on Sunday attending Congregational or Episcopal churches because in those churches my soul found what it was hungry for. In a few months I determined to abandon law and to enter the ministry. That I should ever become a Methodist preacher never once entered my mind. And thus you see my decision to enter the Congregational Church was fixed before I had made the acquaintance of a single professor in the Boston University School of Theology. No professor in that institution had the slightest influence over me either in the direction of keeping me in the Methodist Church or of inducing me to leave it. I was a Congregationalist in everything but name long before I left Ohio.
>
> But I have never ceased to love the church of my father and mother. It is the church of nearly all of my kindred and most of my dearest friends. I am proud of the Methodist Church. I am proud of her founder. I am proud of her history. I am proud of her present usefulness and honor. No man can go beyond me in gratitude and praise for what she has done, and no man has firmer faith than I in her magnificent future.

It appears, therefore, that this young man was not in the least estranged from Methodism by influences at work in our School of Theology, but at the outset by some things not congenial, and especially by having seen

"the inside of Methodist politics." So far as this preacher is concerned, our school, therefore, is vindicated, though our ministry and clerical politics are not.

The next of our recent graduates to leave the Methodist communion is a young man who was beloved and respected in the school and out of it, a Christian gentleman of such a type as would secure for him a welcome among the people of any religious denomination. He took a stand in his school work that would have made him, as was also the case with the last-mentioned graduate, the valedictorian of his class, were such ranking known among us. He is a loss to our church which should occasion sincere regret. In his reply to the circular letter of his accused professor, he wrote thus: —

> Allow me to say emphatically that I have never known you to do or say anything that was in the least disloyal or suggestive of disloyalty to Methodism. You have uniformly taught a theory and method of preaching which is just what is needed by the ministers of a living gospel, and your instructions on the discipline and government of the church seemed to me to have been eminently wise, careful, and, above all, Wesleyan. Personally, I have no quarrel with Methodism, except that it did not seem to have any use for me. I asked the presiding elders at Boston for work, but they had nothing, and were indifferent. I presume I might have found work in Methodism if I had scrambled round more, and cultivated the presiding elders, but I could not. I honor Methodism in its noble, devout, and aggressive work. I am proud of its men and achievements. But I might say this: I have had unusual opportunities of associating with the younger men of the church in a perfectly frank and candid way; and, speaking for them, I might say that if there is anything of a weakening of denominational spirit among the educated young men of the church, I am sure that it is due more than anything else to the following causes: 1. The self-laudation of Methodism. It seems to many as if Wesley and Methodism were often shouted louder than Christ and Christianity, almost as if the one had superseded the other. 2. The organization of the denominational Epworth League, instead of uniting with the undenominational and interdenominational Christian Endeavor Society. There are many educated and devoted young men, very many, who consider this the gravest mistake of modern Methodism. 3. The unreasonableness of the present disciplinary requirements for ministerial ordination, which put a discount on theological training by refusing to allow the full three years' seminary course to count for three years at least in the Conference course. 4. And, lastly, but not least, the machine-politics in Annual and General Conference management. There is a growing suspicion that the leadings of a Divine Providence are more often frustrated than obeyed in Conference appointments and elections, and that the brethren have their heads fuller of methods of presenting creditable Conference reports and of securing their next appointment than of devotion to Christ and self-sacrifice for His cause.

Here, as in the previous instance, we have, as you notice, a complete vindication of our Theological School, but not a vindication of some of our official brethren. In this letter, also, are made known to us the thoughts that are revolving in the minds of "the educated young men of the church," to which we must no longer be indifferent; and we discover in this letter, too, what, perhaps, should have been expected, that they are "the machine politics in Annual and General Conference management" which are disturbing the minds and alienating the hearts of men whom we can ill afford to lose.

The next of our graduates to take work in a Congregational Church is a young man who, throughout his course, held as a scholar in all departments of our work a leading rank. Sterling in his manhood, fearless in his expression, and consecrated in his Christian life, he is a man of whom noble things may be expected. The

people over whom he has been ordained, in a thriving suburb of Boston, have for their new pastor none except words of the highest commendation. The circular letter of the accused professor elicited from this graduate the following reply: —

No word or action on your part influenced me to leave the Methodist Episcopal Church for the Congregational communion. On the other hand, I well remember that you pointed out the advantages of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and urged me (if I could conscientiously do so) to remain with that people. Moreover, your words caused me to canvass the subject anew; but the more I thought of it, the more clearly I saw that I could not consistently remain in the Methodist communion. My difficulty was along the line of polity, administration, and churchism. Personal observation leads me to conclude that, other things being equal, the minister in Annual Conference relations who does the most "scheming" and "log rolling" for place by fawning on the average presiding elder, and by cultivating certain Conference leaders, is the man who is lionized, and hailed everywhere as a distinguished success. For myself, I concluded a few months since that I needed no further proof of ecclesiastical favoritism and narrowness.

The charge that has been made against you by one of the Methodist bishops is, to my best knowledge, false and mean. I have written strongly, but I have written as I feel, aggravated doubtless by the knowledge that an esteemed instructor of mine is blamed for what should not be laid to his charge, but to that of sectarian zealots.

While in this letter, as in the former ones, there is a complete vindication of our Theological School from the charges that freely have been circulated, yet there is a heavy indictment against clerical politics, which are obtruding their ghastly and withering presence into our church administration, to the disgust of our devout and educated young men.

The brother who the most recently has left our ministry is entitled, among several other recommendations that could be given, to this one, that, in our judgment, no student during a full course in our school ever has made greater improvement than he. Though having just begun his work in one of the wards of Boston, his people already are speaking in the highest terms of his services, which are needlessly lost to the Methodist Church. It should be said that, before leaving the appointment to which he was sent last spring, he obtained the full consent of both the church and the presiding elder, and did nothing that has been regarded otherwise than honorable. In his letter to the accused professor, he says: —

Replying to yours of the 21st inst., it gives me great pleasure to say to you what I have for some time desired to say, knowing, as I have known, the feeling that exists in some circles regarding your relation to those of us who through a consistent application of Arminianism have proved "disloyal" (?) to the M.E. Church.

As to my own case, I can say with the fullest confidence that so far from influencing me to leave the M.E. Church, it was you that influenced me, more than all the other members of the theological faculty combined, to stay in that church as long as I did. I well remember when, with this problem of church relationship beginning to menace my peace of mind, I used to approach the professor's desk after class with questions that I have since thought gave the professor an excellent chance to grow in the grace of patience. You always received me with uniform kindness and met my questions with *reasons* why, feeling as I did, I should remain a Methodist; and had I found in all others in high places the same straightforwardness and fairness, I probably should be a Methodist to-day.

It was my fortune last year to be asked for unanimously by the quarterly conference of a church in a fall Annual Conference. It came about without the least shadow of scheming or aggression on my part. The presiding bishop was willing to make the transfer and appointment, but a certain presiding elder in that Conference stubbornly and successfully opposed it on the sole ground of

its being a *transfer;* and this was done when prominent men in that Conference were deploring the lack of young men among them to fill the places made vacant by those who through weight of years were dropping out.

You will allow me to interrupt the reading of this letter long enough to say that this affair occurred in a Western Conference. Last spring the same brother most urgently was asked for by an important church in a New England Conference. The request of the church and his own interests were ignored, or at least overruled, and the presiding bishop took occasion, as this brother expresses it, to lash the Conference over his shoulders. I quote again this brother's words: —

Among the factors that led to my decision I may mention a principle laid down by the Bishop at the New Hampshire Conference last spring. He said, in substance, that no Methodist preacher ought to have any voice whatever in fixing his own appointment, and by his (the Bishop's) administration of the affairs of that Conference he said the same of churches. This leaves the matter of course with the Bishop and his cabinet. I imagine the effect of such a statement on me in view of my experience the fall before. Doubtless the Bishop meant to frown upon clerical politics, but I cannot imagine a position better adapted to increase that deporable evil. Nothing fosters intrigue like despotism. When men cannot speak freely, they are doubly tempted to "pull wires" and resort to all kinds of scheming.

Now, my brethren, these words clearly enough show that our School of Theology has had nothing to do in alienating this young man from the Methodist ministry, and they also suggest the inquiry whether, in these last days, and in the American Republic, it is wise to bring into unqualified prominence the monarchical element in our church government to the exclusion of whatever of democracy there is? Is not the saving of young men

to our ministry of as great importance as is the exercise of unrestricted episcopal authority? Should not a Methodist Bishop in the United States of America be a democrat as well as an autocrat?

In concluding this correspondence, we must aver that whatever of moral force there is in the School of Theology of Boston University, it has been used from the day the school came into this city to make its students consecrated men and loyal to the *government* and *discipline* of the Methodist Episcopal Church; and that some of our brethren outside of the school, who are its critics, have but the faintest idea of the efforts that year after year have been made to quiet the unrest in the hearts of our best men — an unrest begotten partly by official coldness and partly by the blight and curse of clerical politics.

But we cannot well pass from this point without saying a few words in the interest of our young preachers who have had no connection with our School of Theology. While speaking of some of those outside of our graduates who have left the Methodist ministry, a writer who belongs to a Southern Conference, a leading man in our Southern work, and one of the noblest of our men, thus expresses himself: —

Grave charges are freely made as to oblique methods on the part of managers and leaders in Conference and educational work. Consecrated and aspiring young men have left for other fields of labor, though sorely needed in the home field. It is openly charged that men transferred to strategic points and able to do successful work there, have literally been driven away by the hostility and jealousy of self-constituted leaders in the very Conferences that they came to serve.

Is it surprising, therefore, if some of our young men, when standing on the threshold of a Conference, being met there by a spirit of indifference and even of hostility, should look in other directions? If this behavior towards our young men is not, strictly speaking, clerical politics, though there is a suspicion that they are often involved, is it not, at least, a short-sighted and clumsy policy that no wise man should adopt? And we are reminded at this point of what appeared in *Zion's Herald* not long since over the signature of "Paul Penniman," who says:—

> I have been quite a little concerned about a talented Methodist preacher who has strong temptations to sever his connection with the church of his youth. . . . He is talented, and cannot help knowing it. He is successful, and does not fail to see it. Very few of his brethren are his equal in the pulpit, and he does not intentionally neglect any part of his legitimate work. And yet his salary to-day is hardly sufficient to support and educate his family. He is still a young man. He was asked for at churches of much higher grade than the one he is now serving and was anxious to make a change, but his elder, who is also a warm personal friend, urged and insisted on his staying where he was. And this was the reason: "There are so many changes, and there are so many older men who must be kept somewhere near the grade they have been having, that we cannot consistently send you to the places which are so urgent for you." He understood his elder's perplexity, but he cannot understand why efficiency rather than age should not decide the question. The last Conference was a severe test to his loyalty. Now comes an opportunity in some other denomination to double his present salary and take a position in society which has not been accorded him thus far. I do not wonder that he hesitates. Some preachers say, "Let him go, if he is dissatisfied." To my mind we could better afford to part with the men who say that of him. . . . We have reason to be proud of men who have remained with us in spite of flattering inducements to go elsewhere. We have as great reason to regret the unwise methods which have almost forced some others to depart from us when we needed them and they needed us.

That is sensible talk, and, together with the other matters just brought to our attention, leads us to ask: How long must these young men of rare promise continue to see things which with half an eye they cannot help seeing, whose tendency is to wean them from the church of their choice? How long must they continue to have forced upon their attention the fact that success is not always measured by personal purity, spirituality, or power to persuade men to become holy, but by "advancement to a secretaryship, or editor's chair, or to the episcopacy," and that these "advancements" are secured not always by worthiness, but essentially by the same methods, in some instances, as those made use of in corrupt municipal and ward politics? How long must these young men of pure minds and noble hearts continue to witness on the floors of the Conference to which they are asking admittance the "button-holings, the whisperings, the nods and winks," and the various other confidential communications of ministers while manipulating the machine, in order to secure for themselves or their friends some official plunder or position? How long must these young men who refuse to become participants in what are essentially political rings, and who at personal sacrifice are loyal to the government and discipline of the church, continue to feel the pressure of a hand, perhaps invisible, that prevents them from reaching positions to which they are entitled and for which they are sought? Is it a subject of wonder that now and then a young man of promise has been disturbed, and that his exalted ideas

of Methodism have suffered partial or total eclipse? The wonder is, rather, that there have been so little disturbance, dissatisfaction, and disloyalty. We speak of what we know, when saying, in view of the temptations which have come to some of our young men, and the unbrotherly and unsympathetic treatment to which they have been subjected, that their loyalty to Methodism has been heroic, and in not a few instances has amounted to a kind of martyrdom. We do aver that the attitude of our church authorities towards our young men no longer should be frigid and dictatorial, but sympathetic and cordial. We do not ask that they may be rocked too tenderly, as in a cradle, but we do ask that on the day of their graduation they be not turned over to the cold charities of the outside world to shift for themselves, or be left at the doorways of our church, like foundlings, not knowing in what direction to turn their steps. Should this be their fate, are they alone to blame if the attractive fireside, the ample board and fraternal greetings of other Christians shall lead them, in their bewilderment, into the embrace of a sister denomination?

Well, my brethren, this point has held our attention longer than was intended at the outset. Still, its discussion may not prove an unmitigated evil if henceforth our friends, in the assignment of causes, when four or five in as many hundreds of our theological graduates leave our ministry for that of some other denomination, shall be more careful to ascertain all the facts in the case; and if what we have said in any measure shall contribute to the efforts that are now

making to lift our church and ministry out of the thraldom of clerical politics, we shall be glad that we have spoken.

Did time allow, we would speak of one other of the baneful consequences of clerical politics — the most baneful of all — namely, the displeasure, if not the curse, of God. But perhaps we shall be pardoned in leaving you to depict for yourselves the wreck that will be made of Methodism if God shall utter His judgments against our iniquity. And must He not do this after a time if our greatness in numbers and wealth makes us proud and boastful, if our labors are unsanctified and selfish, and if the ecclesiastical vices of which we are guilty are longer permitted to defile the temple that Christ longs to honor and bless?

III.

We now have reached the closing, and, from a practical point of view, the most important division of our subject. At the outset we are confronted with this question: Are there effective remedies that can be applied to the evils that have been enumerated? Can clerical politics, at least in their offensive and dangerous characteristics, be banished from the Methodist Episcopal Church?

We reply: Not easily, and not without continuous agitation, and not without the general and hearty coöperation of those who as yet are loyal to the primitive spirit of our church.

In carrying out reform measures, in case of an association of persons, no general method can be prescribed

better than the one adopted by the Jews under Nehemiah at the rebuilding of the broken-down walls of Jerusalem. That method was, you remember, for every priest to make repairs "over against his own house" (Neh. 3:28).

In pursuance of a like policy when attempting reforms and repairs in our Methodist Church machinery, the renovation should begin with the individual membership of the Annual Conference. That is, the first thing to be done by every member, if he has been a sinner, is to resolve, for the sake of Christ and the church, to sin no more, and from this day forward not to run before he is sent, but await God's bidding and that of the church. Let him never again visit Conferences and Christian conventions or seek newspaper popularity, in order to keep his name before the public; let him never again make contributions of money, newspaper articles, addresses, lectures, or sermons for any object whatever, if influenced to do so through an expectation of a reciprocity of favors on election day; and on the floor of his own Conference never again let him use his own voice unless there is manifest occasion for it.

If, on careful self inspection, any Conference member is conscious that he has been seeking, even by indirect methods, official positions, or if strongly suspected by others of doing so, let him announce to his friends, making no noise about it, that on no conditions will he allow his name to be used for such positions during the next quadrennial of our Conference calendar. Here is a practical test which will establish as well as any other

the sincerity of one's love for Methodism. And this test may show some of these men how utterly selfish, notwithstanding their apparent liberality and cordiality, they actually have been. But if the guilty or suspected members will not renounce voluntarily their self-seeking and remove themselves from candidacy, they should be removed with such force as can be applied in these cases, without delay or ceremony.

Every member of the Annual Conference who is desirous of reform should keep in mind the fact that when unworthy men are elected to the General Conference, and then by that Conference are appointed or elected to important official positions, the Annual Conference primarily must be held responsible. Unworthy men will not appear on the floors of the General Conference by being illegally counted in, nor will they secure an election there through the casting of tissue ballots; our church has not yet descended to that degree of degradation, nor has this ever been attempted, except in one instance, and in that one it speedily was rebuked; but if those unworthy men appear in that royal gathering of our church it will be because the Annual Conference of which they are members place in their hands the credentials of a legitimate election. Since, therefore, the Annual Conference has the power, it should be a part of its religious duty at once and forever to put an end to the successful reign of all clerical politicians.

Those members of the Annual Conference who unquestionably mean to be loyal to the true spirit of Methodism, and who constitute a large majority of

every Conference, should be so pronounced in their disapprobation of anything that savors of clerical politics that the self-seeking minority henceforth will not dare, by deed, word, or look, to solicit support. In the words of one from whom we already have quoted: "It should be enough to condemn any man that he presumes to let it be known that he desires to attain to any position in the gift of the church." Any one who has a fawning or patronizing air near Conference time is to be suspected; any one who hints that he would like your vote is unworthy of it; and on your part it is an act of disloyalty if you cast it in his support. By all means should "the chronic, weather-beaten, peripatetic candidate" henceforth be doomed to the glorious work found within the bounds of a pastoral charge of moderate responsibilities. Before going hence he should have abundant time and opportunity for consecration and repairs.

But there is another man who must be watched — the man who says to you that he does not care for official position, and that on personal grounds he certainly has no desire whatever to be sent to General Conference; who adds, however, with extreme diffidence and perhaps with apparent reluctance, "But, my brother, you know that my presence there for particular reasons will be necessary at the approaching session." Ah, how neat that is! If the man who openly and directly asks your vote merits your disdain, this man now before us a hundred times more merits it. We cannot rid ourselves of the feeling that any man, whatever his standing in the church or in the community, who suggests that his

presence in the General Conference is necessary in order to secure the advocacy or success of some measure, should be buried on the spot beneath frowns and contempt fathoms deep. His conceit and presumption should receive a stroke of remediless paralysis.

For what can be a greater insult than for any member of an Annual Conference to presume that he is able to do more on the floor of the General Conference in carrying an important measure essential to the prosperity of our church than can a score of other members in that same Conference? The best work is done there by consecrated and modest men who never could be tempted to insinuate that their particular services are indispensable. In a few instances we have watched those men who appear to think themselves of great importance, or who claim, as a matter of course, on the ground of some superior qualification, that they should be chosen as delegates to General Conference, but usually have found that their advocacy of the measures they thought themselves eminently qualified to champion amounted, so far as visible results are concerned, to just nothing at all. Perhaps the results would have been different had not too much of their valuable time and energy been expended in the seeking of personal aggrandizement and promotion.

At this point the suggestion of ex-Governor Evans is worthy of our consideration He says that for the credit of our church and for the purpose of extinguishing the whole race of ecclesiastical politicians, every Annual Conference at which delegates to the General Conference are to be elected should adopt at its opening session a

resolution binding all its members not to vote for any brother as a delegate "who is known to be a candidate or improperly working for any candidate for a church office, even if he is the most prominent member." And so far as the New England Conference is concerned, you are hereby notified that such a resolution at its approaching session is to be submitted.

But in being still more definite, allow me to say — and owing to the appointment I receive from the Annual Conference it is not unbecoming in me to say it — that if there is any honor in being a delegate to the General Conference, it should be conferred, at least for the next few years, on the faithful men who are in the active pastorate, and who have not yet received this distinction. There is scarcely an Annual Conference of any considerable size that has not a score of such men. We urge this selection all the more strenuously because of certain damaging statements which have received quite general circulation, and because of the magnitude of the pastoral office which has been belittled through a misconception of its dignity and through greed for official positions.

An earnest writer on these subjects, while speaking of the difficulty of answering intelligent laymen when they inquire how it happens that too large a ratio of General Conference delegates is composed of successful ecclesiastical politicians who owe their position to what the vulgar call "wire-pulling," makes use of these words: —

> There may be an alarming significance in the fact that in a delegation of five or six ministers only one is a pastor, while the great majority are presiding elders and office-holders. When agents, secretaries, editors, presidents and professors of colleges, and all the presiding elders, are scrambling for a place in General Conference, and are using their official position to further their personal ambitions, there seems to be no chance for the man who is doing the great work of a successful preacher and pastor. Our soul-winners, our preachers of revival power and saintliness, are rarely honored with an election to General Conference. As a rule, with exceptions, the ecclesiastical politicians snatch all these honors and are accorded the front seats in the official synagogue. . . . It is coming to be common talk that our Methodist ministry considers the pastorate as of minor importance, only a stepping stone to a semi-secular agency, or to a secretaryship, or an editorship, or the episcopacy.
>
> It is also said that Methodist ministers who have once been *elevated* (?) to official position, consider it an affliction and humiliation to be sent back and down to the ranks of the pastorate. . . . It is almost laughable to see with what pious convictions, deep, after-prayer convictions, some ministers are drawn away from the pastorate to the exaltation of official position, and the piety of their convictions is excelled only by the persistency of their self-supported candidacy.

My brethren, I am not responsible for these charges. They had been circulated far and near months before the invitation came to me to address you. But in view of them and of whatever facts there may be in their support, let the highway and the royal way to the General Conference hereafter be through faithfulness and consecration in the pastoral office. We can think of no other one thing that so effectually and quickly will clear our Methodist church atmosphere of clerical politics as this restriction in the choice of General Conference delegates to such faithful and devout men in the active pastorate as have not yet received this distinction.

In the meantime, let our brethren enter into no cliques; let them form no combinations; let them give

no pledges to support any candidate, and let them allow no man of high or low standing to manipulate their votes by dictation, gratuitous advice, cunningly-devised suggestions, or otherwise.

But some one replies: We *must* form combinations and agree beforehand on candidates, otherwise elections, without consuming valuable time, are impossible. The one who says this either is hoping to gain something by combinations or else is entirely mistaken in his judgment. He seems to ignore altogether the possibility of Divine guidance, and the good sense of his brethren in the ministry does not enter at all into his calculations.

The thing to be done is this: Before going to the Annual Conference each member should study carefully and prayerfully a copy of the last Minutes, and for himself decide on the men who, in his judgment, are fittest to represent the church in the positions to be filled, excluding from his list at the outset those who in any way have been mixed up in clerical politics; and then, on election day, "Let every man cast his ballot for officers and delegates unangered, unawed, uncaucused, unbiased, silently, prayerfully, in the fear of God, and leave the counted ballots to express the judgment of the Conference without the insolence of patronizing advice or the infamy of partisan electioneering."

In our discussion of reform measures we have now reached the General Conference. If what has been published to the world is true, or even half true, there is need of some repairing and rebuilding of broken-down walls in the administration of the important trusts coming within the province of that body. Perhaps at

this point there is no need of additional suggestions as to methods of procedure, for essentially the same principles should guide the General Conference members as those just urged on the attention of Annual Conference members. It is manifest that delegates who have been sinning should be urged for the sake of the good name of our church to repent and sin no more. But if they will not do this, or if through years of sinning they have lost their sense of propriety, or are unable voluntarily to overcome their lust for office, then they should have the utmost help of every one of their associate delegates and be remanded to such effective retirement that their names no longer shall be mentioned in the list of those who are available for ecclesiastical promotion. What is more pitiable and despicable than a delegate to General Conference who for years has been on the borders of starvation for some ecclesiastical position, or who, as is said to have been the case with one of our ministers, cries for it, or who, "in the shabbiness of his increasing ministerial inefficiency is found standing at the quadrennial corner holding out the battered hat of a long candidacy for the pittance of 'Anything, please, just so it be an office!'"

It should be kept in mind, too, that they are the faithful and worthy pastors in the General Conference who should come into prominence, rather they should be brought into prominence, for, of themselves, they never will be in strife for that which is not voluntarily and cheerfully conferred. The following suggestions, offered by a Methodist preacher in one of the New York Conferences, certainly are worthy of our consideration:—

Cut down officialism. Make it less a fetich. In some way get rid of the long line of lieutenants and dependants that stand waiting for the advancement of those ahead of them, that they may drop into the vacated places — the places which, with the strongest self-motive, they help to make vacant by political work, and upon which they place a claim by political service.

The difficult and hopeless part of this whole problem is that the "sub" waits to be the chief, the assistant to be the principal, the secretary and editor to be the bishops. The "heeler and claquer" of the General Conference expects his reward, and generally gets it.

The piercing eye of the great church should be turned upon this whole miserable business, and the brand of her condemnation and wrath be burned deep into it by the fire of that relentless eye.

And, too, the General Conference should be broad-minded; it should be able to see beyond the narrow limitations of its own membership.

Narrowness is not Methodistic, but indicates selfishness. Judging from the constituency of some of our late General Conferences, the most available, worthy, and useful men in every instance have not been, in that gathering, the representatives of our church. Why, then, should appointments or elections to office be confined to the representatives who chance to be there? Should the members of that great representative body be suspected of saying or feeling that, as they constitute the Conference and have the disposition of its offices, they will distribute the spoils exclusively among themselves?

In a word, when an agent or editor, when a secretary or bishop, is to be appointed or elected, there should be no limitations nor clannishness, but disregarding the law of custom and carrying out the true spirit of Methodism, why should not the eyes of the General Conference sweep

the entire field in order to discover the most suitable man, and then should he not be placed in official position, whether or not he is, or ever has been, a member of the General Conference? This policy certainly will tend to break up General Conference rings and will relieve it and also the Annual Conference of some of the "wire-pulling" that disturbs their peace and efficiency.

Our distinguished layman, ex-Governor Evans, who has recommended a resolution for the consideration of the Annual Conference, has also recommended the following one for the General Conference, which it is hoped that body, if it cares for its reputation, will heed and adopt. He says: "When the General Conference meets, let it, with or without a preamble setting forth its object and necessity, adopt a resolution asserting that it will not elect any one to a church office who either in person, or by the improper agency of his friends, seeks it."

If such a resolution is adopted, the Governor goes on to say, "It will not only prevent the growth of the evil, but will exterminate it, for no one, however ambitious, will use the certain means of his own defeat."

Our concluding word is a brief one. These evils of which we have been speaking are grave and deplorable, but they are not incurable; indeed, they soon will be cured if the caustic of agitation is well applied, and honest attempts at reform are made. Of our guilt no denial or defense should be attempted, and no palliation should be urged. Infallibility and immaculate correctness are not our boast; but, in consonance with our

creed, an evolution towards a possible *perfection* should be our sacred and solemn aim. The nearly forgotten New Testament requirements, "In honor preferring one another," "each esteeming the other better than himself," and the story of the washing of the disciples' feet, and the account of the choosing of the highest and lowest seats in the banquet hall, should enter anew into our thought and shape our conduct. This divine spirit of gospel magnanimity, modesty and humility, pervading our ministry is the revival of religion now to be hoped for, and prayed for, and worked for. With this revival among our preachers; with the royal and New Testament code of clerical ethics taking the place of clerical politics; with the instinct for ecclesiastical emoluments giving place to an instinct for souls; with no change of doctrinal creed; with the same "all-sufficient and all-efficient remedies" that for a century have been successfully employed for the redemption of men from the power and degradation of sin, and with a profounder consecration of our entire church membership, the outlook for the Methodist Episcopal Church is imposing and inspiring. In spite of her faults, the rumble of her chariot wheels already is heard along the water-ways and the mountain-ranges of nearly every land, civilized and uncivilized, on the face of the globe. Nor need the day be distant when the bold and seemingly arrogant claim of John Wesley, though spoken in no spirit of arrogance, "The world is my parish," literally can be repeated by the church he founded.

My brethren, I confidently look forward to a day when our ecclesiastical walls shall be rebuilded, to a day

of broader views and of better things, to a day of successes greater and grander than any which as yet have been witnessed; to a day when the church of our choice shall be able to throw her mantle of protection and love over a world's unchurched masses, extending her hand to the lost and weary of the most distant zones; and then, in cheerful and magnanimous union, and in the most friendly coöperation with the whole sisterhood of evangelical denominations, the Methodist Church unostentatiously shall map out and include within the bounds of one and another of her Annual Conferences every inch of the earth's surface where dwells a human being.

SECOND ADDRESS.

MARCH TWENTY-FIRST.

MR. PRESIDENT, BRETHREN AND FRIENDS, — First of all allow us to thank those members of this preacher's meeting who voted to grant our request to make public before your body certain evidence bearing on the subject of clerical politics.*[1] Indeed, where else, unless here, should a member of the New England Conference speak his mind, if having, on church matters, anything that seems to him of importance to say?

We can spend a few moments of our time at the outset in no better way, perhaps, than in outlining briefly the origin and history of the *excitement* on "Clerical Politics," in the midst of which we now find ourselves.

Early in 1890, for the purpose of "eliciting representative opinions" from different sources on the subject of "Ecclesiastical Politics," a circular letter was sent from the office of *Zion's Herald*, Boston, Mass., to Methodist preachers of high standing, who were filling pulpits in widely separated sections of our country.

In response to that letter communications dating from July 2, 1890, to August 6 of that same year were received from the Pacific Slope, from the Western

* The figures 1, 2, 3, etc., found in the body of the text, refer to Notes found in the Appendix.

District, from the Middle District, from the New York District, from the New England District, and from the Southern District. Subsequently these various responses were published in *Zion's Herald*, prefaced with the following note: —

> In the editor's extensive travels over our land to become personally acquainted with our aggressive Methodism, it was discovered that this one painful characteristic of our church-life filled loyal Methodists with chagrin and foreboding. In many instances personal appeal was made that *Zion's Herald* should seek to correct this wrong. It was appreciatively declared that the genius and history of this paper especially qualified it to "speak out" upon this great and growing evil.

The communications from these different sources attracted considerable attention, but though both highly commended and bitterly denounced in a few quarters, appeared to create no general excitement. At a later date they were published in pamphlet form as a symposium, entitled "Ecclesiastical Politics in the Methodist Episcopal Church." The pamphlet was copyrighted by the Patriotic Publishing Company, of Chicago. We do not know to what extent it has been circulated, or what influence it has had, but having on the title page the name of no author or compiler, and all the communications being anonymous, it was not likely to gain the thoughtful hearing it would have received had the name of the editor of *Zion's Herald* been reinforced by those of the men who wrote the symposium.

The editor, as it would seem, cannot well be blamed for the course he pursued, if his motives are what they should be, and what we are bound to suppose them to be, until there is evidence to the contrary, and also

provided he will do what he has advertised himself ready to do, namely, stand voucher for those who wrote the articles in question. He said, for instance, that he had made certain discoveries which he thought should be published. What honest or honorable course was left him, as an editor, except to publish them? His words are explicit:—

> Our readers are assured that the men who write are the elect servants of the church, and are prompted only by the desire to inaugurate a reform in this matter. Their names are withheld at our suggestion for the present, that the attention of the denomination may be concentrated upon the condition revealed rather than upon the persons who expose the situation. *Zion's Herald* assumes the responsibility for what each writer says.

Our church papers and periodicals, however, quite generally refused to follow the lead of the *Herald*, and the evils brought to light in the symposium were dismissed in almost every instance with an editorial note of no considerable length or merit. Our church authorities for the larger part, and our office seekers, except to cover their tracks, were silent, and the ecclesiastical-political tactics of past years were again in use as if nothing had happened. Rings were forming and were as likely to control affairs in the immediate future as they had in the past. Another General Conference was approaching, in which what already had disgraced the church might, for all one could see, again be repeated. Election of delegates to the General Conference by our Eastern States was within sight. Combinations for election purposes with the introduction of elements, not before existing, were organizing. Still, in the way of reform measures, nothing was doing. And the men,

who now deplore our attack on "Clerical Politics" made seven weeks ago, and who since that date have been saying, "These evils should not have been published abroad, but should have been quietly talked over and remedied," had themselves taken not a single step towards any remedial measures.

These very critics have since acknowledged publicly the existence of the evils, and they had abundant opportunity for inaugurating reforms; but so far as we have been able to ascertain, not a word had been spoken or written. Knowing the evils, and knowing perfectly well how to remedy them, why on their part this silence? Why this inaction? Why leave this needed reform to the crude handling of those who are but poorly qualified to cope with it? Two years nearly have passed since the obnoxious symposium appeared. During that time, what meetings did these complainers and critics call? What protests against "conference bosses" were uttered? At this late day it is quite out of place, as it seems to us, for these critics, who knew perfectly what ought to be done (without having done anything at all), now to point out specifically and confidently the course that should have been pursued. Had these wise men appeared as the reformers of Methodism we should not have spoken.

But without any thanks to these critics something was doing. The spirit of "chagrin and foreboding," which had been discovered by *Zion's Herald*, and which for years had filled and stirred the hearts of loyal Methodists, was not slumbering. It longed for an expression from the lips of some one. Others were

ready to give it expression, had the opportunity come to them as it came to us. More wisely, and more to the purpose, and more strongly these others might have spoken, but, pardon us for saying, they could not have spoken with profounder convictions of the evils of "Clerical Politics in the Methodist Episcopal Church" than those that were wrought into the address to which you have already listened.

That address and the one of two weeks later are before you. No reply, as we have said will be made to the second one except the quoted opinions of others, and no comment, as we can see, is called for on the first one, other, perhaps, than this: that no retraction of sentence, word, or syllable on our part will be made. Every word then spoken was weighed, the various possible consequences, even the most serious, were considered, and the agitation called forth is precisely what is now desired and what was then intended.

A mild or anonymous irritant, we had reason to believe, would accomplish nothing. Even a bold Phillipic, a month after the meeting of the ensuing General Conference, would be condemned, or at least adjudged as coming too late to be of practical service, and would have been enjoyed by every clerical politician in our church as a huge joke. The time for the discussion of clerical politics, if agitation and reform were the purpose, was wisely chosen by your committee.

Such, up to the present date, are the origin and history of the exciting stir that has come upon us.

The next advance on our part, as you well know, in a measure, at least, is forced upon us. Evidence in

support of former indictments has been demanded by those who deprecate this discussion and who seem to think that there exists no real occasion for it.

The larger part of the evidence to be presented this morning is in the form of information coming through correspondence which I hold in my hand. [Here Professor Townsend showed two packages of letters whose size produced quite a sensation.] A significant fact as to this correspondence, which I hope you will note, is that with one exception it is entirely spontaneous, and thus being unsolicited it shows the intensity of the popular feeling. And with but two exceptions these letters as yet remain unanswered. More than one of the writers has offered to furnish additional facts if we would but express a desire for them. We have not yet availed ourselves even of this proffered aid, though in due time, if it shall be deemed necessary, a request for it will be made.

A few of these writers have asked that their names for the present be withheld from the public. By some of our hearers it may be thought that the timidity of these brethren is too excessive. Still, prudence may not be without virtue if a preacher feels, should he speak his mind or tell what he knows, that "the bread and butter" of his wife and children might be imperiled. Many a man who has no fear, even to die, might hesitate on the threshold of doing anything that possibly would add to the sufferings of those who providentially are dependent upon him.

But while withholding names and in order to forestall a possible criticism, indeed a probable one, judging

from the past, we give this assurance, that the contents of no anonymous letter shall be presented; that your speaker will stand back of every communication offered and will hold himself responsible and answerable for every statement made. With these assurances we ask permission to withhold for the present the names of all the writers, though having full permission from quite a number to publish their names if we desire to do so.

We make this additional, though perhaps uncalled for, proposition: If the authority or worthiness of the testimony now offered shall be questioned by any considerable number of our Methodist brethren we will select one person, the questioning party shall select another, these two shall name a third, neither one of whom, for obvious reasons, shall be a presiding elder or a preacher, though all shall be laymen of good repute in our church, and these persons, after examining these letters, shall report to this meeting on the validity of the evidence we offer. And if they shall decide that the authors of this correspondence are misrepresented in the quotations made from them, or that they are not among the most worthy clergymen and laymen in the Methodist Episcopal Church, we will offer a public apology for every word spoken, so far as it is based on the letters presented in evidence.

And during the reading of these letters you will bear in mind what is already suggested that this fresh indictment against "clerical politics" is made in response to a challenge and demand for evidence. You must not, therefore, lay the blame of this second installment of subject matter on our shoulders, though we are perfectly

willing to bear it, but on those of our critics who offered in public the challenge.

The first grouping of letters from which we quote are representative of the opinions of worthy and distinguished laymen on the subject of Clerical Politics.

AN OBSTRUCTION.

At this stage of the discussion one of the brethren arose to a point of order, and objected to the reading of any communications unless the names of the authors were given. Taking all the circumstances into account, the chairman ruled against the point of order. By vote of the meeting, however, his ruling was set aside. A motion was then offered forbidding the reading of anonymous communications. After considerable discussion on this hitherto unheard of measure in the history of the Preachers' Meeting, but before the vote was taken, Dr. Townsend stated that he would not betray the confidence that had been imposed in him, and therefore he could not give the names of his informers in cases where publication had been forbidden. He added that if two weeks were granted he would communicate with his informers and obtain as far as possible their consent to use in the address the names desired. It was then voted to grant the Professor's request and the address was postponed for two weeks.

THIRD ADDRESS.

APRIL FOURTH.

MR. PRESIDENT, BRETHREN AND FRIENDS,—Two weeks ago, at the moment our address suffered interruption we felt, that the cause we had espoused would be damaged; that a notoriety, at least in Boston, would attach to the discussion such as might cause regret in the hearts of those who are arrayed on both sides of this controversy; and that before an adjustment could be reached sharp and unbrotherly words might be exchanged in the presence of an audience composed not altogether of Methodists.

But for the larger part those fears, we are pleased to say, were groundless. After the adjournment of that meeting the more earnest of the combatants shook hands; the two leaders in the controversy met in private conference, and with scarcely an allusion to the matter in dispute, quietly discussed other questions relating to our church and its membership.

Still, that we may not appear altogether insensible to what took place on the morning in question, and that we may show cause why a similar interruption should not be repeated, we are constrained to say that, whether intentional or otherwise, a discrimination actually was made against us, which at the time appeared to be a

scheme to disconcert the speaker, though we since have been assured that such was not the intention.

But the fact of the discrimination remains. That is, though there were anonymous quotations in our brother's reply to our former address, yet we venture the opinion that no one present thought of throwing obstructions in his way. One of his unauthorized communications was from a theological professor, one was from "a prominent minister in our church in New England," another from a person who points out "the fatal weakness of Dr. Townsend's address," and still another from a "presiding elder away down East"—four in all, and yet while our brother was making these quotations no one, we repeat, made objection, or rose to a point of order. Why this discrimination? was a question that unbidden forced itself upon us. Why so expeditious in the arrest of one of the speakers, while the other was permitted to proceed unquestioned and unhindered? We are not to pass judgment on the motives of any one, but suggest as a matter of psychological curiosity that the hearts of our brethren be gently probed for an answer.

It may be replied, however, that the cases are not altogether parallel. Grant it. But on second sober thought is the difference such, in the mind of any unprejudiced person, as to justify fully the radical difference in the treatment of the two speakers?

We beg that you call to mind, too, in this connection, the propositions we made, which up to the moment of the interruption we had thought amply sufficient for the protection of both the Preachers' Meeting and of those who had written to us.

They were these: We pledged the audience that no anonymous communication should be presented; that we would be responsible and answerable for all statements made; and that we would submit the entire correspondence to a committee who should examine it and report subsequently on its validity to the Preachers' Meeting. We were not a little surprised, after making these generous concessions, that anything further would be required, or that a demand for the names of our correspondents would be urged, especially at a moment when without a breach of confidence they could not possibly be given. We were troubled all the more because the interruption was not entirely an unpremeditated affair. We were confidentially told of what might be expected, as early as the previous Saturday, by one who incidentally had learned what was intended. We had, therefore, governed ourselves accordingly, and supposed that the propositions offered would be abundantly satisfactory to those concerned, removing completely all cause or occasion for complaint.

We were also slightly annoyed by the fact that a like demand not only was not made on our brother, but to our knowledge never before had been made on any speaker at any time in the entire history of the Boston Methodist Preacher's Meeting.

All this, however, is forgiven; still we may express the hope, if anything this morning is uttered that seems to any one to be without foundation; or if false charges against our church or ministry are made; or if fancies are given when facts have been promised, that the brethren will bear in mind that they have their proper place

for redress. The Annual Conference is not far off. Let the charges be preferred there before a properly organized tribunal and we will be in readiness to answer or suffer the consequences.

We make this request, in part, because a rumor to which, perhaps, we should not give credence, has reached us that, this morning if there is the least occasion, an interruption speedily will follow. Personally we cannot believe that such will be the case unless the provocation is a most aggravating one, which you may rest assured we strenuously shall seek to avoid. The fact that our preachers last Monday without opposition voted to hold the meeting this morning in this church; that no limitations as to time have been placed upon us, and that personal assurances from those who have reason to be the most sensitive and troubled have been given us that the utmost fairness is to be extended, have relieved us fully from such apprehensions as otherwise might occasion anxiety.

Before presenting the evidence called for, we ask attention to two criticisms that have been in free circulation. The first relates to the so-called "personal defense," in the address of March seventh. Perhaps that element was made too prominent. At the time, as you remember, we expressed some hesitation as to its introduction in the address. But the School of Theology had been assailed far and near. An absolutely false charge repeatedly had been made, and the president of the university had felt that unless something was said the reputation of the school would be likely to suffer.

Our object therefore, in that part of the address was

to show the groundlessness of the charge, and at the same time to make a point against clerical politics. With this double purpose in view there seemed no other, or at least no better, way open, under the circumstances, than the one taken.

The other criticism, which has been reiterated East and West, is, that in our address the entire church was assailed and that the whole body of the clergy was indicted and insulted.

Now those who utter this criticism either are suffering from some strange hallucination, are quite ignorant of what was said, or else apparently are guilty of willful misrepresentation. For repeatedly there were made by us the most liberal qualifications. In order to disabuse the popular mind of the groundless impression, for which some of our own church publications partly are responsible, we beg leave to repeat some of the language previously used. Near the introduction will be found these words: —

> That the clerical politician has unusual temptations and opportunities in our church to do his unholy work, there is no question. Perhaps, all things considered, the wonder is that there have been *so few* comparatively who have yielded, though tempted.

In this quotation, can it easily be made out that the whole body of the clergy is indicted and insulted? "Few comparatively" cannot mean the whole.

And later on in the address while speaking of the Annual Conferences this statement was made: —

> The Annual Conferences *are generally composed* of good, pious, unsuspicious ministers, who are not ambitious for higher offices, but for greater usefulness, and are ready to prefer one another,

By any amount of contortions, can there be rung from those words an indictment or an insult against the whole body of the clergy?

And afterwards while discussing the General Conference this acknowledgment as to the worthiness of the delegates was made: —

> It is a body in which one might expect to find great learning fearless advocacy of righteous measures, fervent piety, the noblest and purest of men, the truest and most laborious of Christians And no one questions the statement that such men have been found in every General Conference since our church was organized.

And in that same connection, too, was quoted with approval the words of a distinguished clergyman who has written on clerical politics: —

> Here in this great legislative body are men who are the worst of advisers, the weakest of debaters (*vox et præterea nihil*), the shabbiest of Christians, the ignoblest of men, etc. That their *numbers are not relatively great* is gladly conceded; but their influence is harmful far beyond their numerical strength.

And while suggesting some of the remedies for existing evils these words, concerning whose meaning no one ought to be mistaken, were spoken: —

> Those members of the Annual Conference who unquestionably mean to be loyal to the true spirit of Methodism, *and who constitute a large majority of every Conference*, should be so pronounced in their disapprobation of anything that savors of clerical politics that the self-seeking *minority* henceforth will not dare, by deed, word, or look, to solicit support.

What, therefore, can the friends or foes of Methodism be thinking of, when, in face of these reiterated statements as to the general purity of our ministry, they affirm that the entire church was assailed, and that the whole body of the clergy was indicted and insulted in that

address of March seventh? Is there not here another psychological curiosity?

Listen again: "*Few comparatively have yielded.*" "The Annual Conferences *are generally composed of good, pious, unsuspicious ministers.*" That the numbers of objectionable politicians "*are not relatively great is gladly conceded.*" The ministers "who unquestionably mean to be loyal to the true spirit of Methodism constitute *the large majority of every Conference.*" "In *some instances* methods are resorted to like those employed in ward-room politics." "But who can doubt that in *some cases*" there is wrong doing; "*some* of the members of an Annual Conference are suspected men."

Such are the words with which we sought amply to guard the address of nine weeks ago against the very charge that has been made against it. And we may add that we have not seen an editorial from any of our church papers referring to our address, and we have not seen or heard of a criticism on it from any source in which there have not been free admissions as to the existence of objectionable clerical politics in our church. Two ex-presiding elders in this Conference have confessed to me that from personal knowledge they could furnish an illustration supporting every charge we have made. Were there time we could give you chapters of these admissions. Even in my brother's rejoinder there is more than one concession to the fact of wrong doing among our church politicians. For instance, in order to make a point against us he published what was a surprise, and from one point of view of course a gratification. Speaking of our suggestion that the election

of men to General Conference offices should not be confined to those who chance to be members of that body, the good Doctor said:—

> At the last General Conference a man who was not a member was chosen to the highest office in the gift of the church. Those who saw how that election was secured do not need to be told that Dr. Townsend's plan signally failed.

This language has neither point nor meaning if it does not allow of the following interpretation: Bishop John P. Newman, at the last General Conference, was elected to the highest office in the gift of the church by methods such as all high minded men must condemn.

Again, our brother, in order to weaken the plea we offered that for the present our active and faithful pastors should be elected to the General Conference, gave publicity and the weight of his own authority to this fact (?):—

> Not far enough away to be out of our sight, a score of them (pastors) recently held an Anti-Ecclesiastical Political Convention to squelch combinations. They determined to send all but pastors to back seats, and nominated a ticket for General Conference on which these innocent haters of rings, combines, or politics of any kind, put six of their own names!

Now, if the Doctor can substantiate this statement—and why should he not be called on to do so, since without the slightest qualification he declares it to be a fact—we should have a strong case in support of our indictment against clerical politics "not far enough away to be out of sight."

But unfortunately for us, there is said to be no foundation for this fact; that is, we presume our good Doctor refers to a meeting said to be held by the preachers

of the Hudson River Ministerial Association. The president of that Association, Dr. Oakley, writes thus:—

> In regard to all matters relating to General Conference delegates the Hudson River Ministerial Association is as innocent as an angel. The president and secretary of the Association had no knowledge that there was to be such a meeting and were not invited to be present."—[See *Poughkeepsie Eagle*, March 16th.]

But the most curious part of this whole affair which, by the way, lets us into another phase of clerical political performance, is that this story, told at the expense of "faithful pastors," is a falsehood from its beginning to its end, manufactured, our informer says, by a Methodist preacher, a "political demagogue and trickster," or some friend of his, for the purpose of smirching the brethren named, and promoting his own personal interests. [See *New York Tribune*, March 31.]

My brethren, two or three additional cases like this one which now is undergoing investigation in the New York East Conference would render our address this morning unnecessary, if not superfluous.

Now, in view of these admissions, it would seem that our culpability is reduced to this,—not that we have made a charge destitute of foundation, but that our charge is too sweeping, which is what we *deny*, and appeal to the published address as the basis of that denial.

In two sentences we repeat what we have said before, and if there is any possibility of being misunderstood or misrepresented we could wish that these words, while

we utter them, might silence for a moment the din of a continent, and reach the shores of the Pacific Ocean:—He who says the entire Methodist Church, or any large proportion of it, is corrupt, says what is false; and he who says that we have ever brought such a sweeping indictment against that church as is charged upon us, says what is false and slanderous. We hope on this point that we are now fully understood.

Week before last we sent out letters to our correspondents asking permission to give their names to the brethren in our address this morning. A number of these writers, without hesitation, granted our request. But others manifested so great anxiety as to the possible or probable consequences which might follow should their names be disclosed, that we shall withhold their communications, at least until after Conference.

One of our brethren who had given us facts that would be of great value in this discussion, of the reliability of which there is no question, asked subsequently that they be not used over his signature, saying: "I conclude it is not best for you to read my statements, as it would stir up personal feeling against me. Let me die unnoticed and unknown after fifty years of love and toil and self-denial for the great Methodist Episcopal Church. If now I were fifty instead of seventy years of age, I would seek a little Congregational parish in New Hampshire, and quietly conclude my probationary term of life." Now, when a man well on in years feels in that way, we cannot repeat to him our request for the use of his name.

A young brother, after expressing his willingness to

go before a justice of the peace and take oath to all he has disclosed to us, adds: "I have not as yet gained a position that enables me to laugh at men who have it in their hands to injure me. I am not ready now to go to my own funeral. It was hinted a number of times last Monday after the meeting, that any who gave their names would be dead men." Hesitation on the part of such a young man we will not criticise, and certainly we shall not embarrass him. We have given these, one from an elderly preacher and the other from a young man, as samples of letters received, and also to illustrate some of the embarrassments that result from the vote passed two weeks ago.

But fortunately all our correspondents do not shrink from danger or responsibility, and it is the testimony of these men that we now submit for your consideration.

In view of the exceptions taken to our former address, and in view of the demands that have been made, it is incumbent upon us to present evidence as to the following matters: That we are far from standing alone in this controversy; that the conviction is widespread that "clerical politics" are the bane and the peril of Methodism; that the picture showing the evils of "clerical politics," presented nine weeks ago, in the judgment of prominent pastors and laymen was not in the least overdrawn; that our "personal defense" (which has received unfavorable comment from several sources) is justified by those who are well qualified to judge of the matter, and who are best acquainted with all the facts involved; that on account of "clerical politics" scores and hundreds of our clergymen and

laymen have left our church, while many others are contemplating doing so when a favorable opportunity presents itself; that among those who as yet remain in the church the "irritation and unrest" incident to clerical and ecclesiastical politics would justify even stronger statements than any that hitherto have been employed; that the presiding eldership is too frequently used for selfish and other unworthy purposes, and that efforts are making to lessen the opportunity for such abuses, or to abolish the office altogether; that the democratic element must be introduced more largely as a prevention of disaffection, especially among the laity, and among ministers, as a correction of the evils of "clerical politics"; that money considerations more than once have been used to secure votes and appointments.

In support of these various claims we present first a grouping of letters from laymen. The following is from an influential man, whom our church has honored and who for years has been an honor to it. Few men in the western part of our country have had better opportunities for knowing of clerical politics than he.

February 13, 1892.

PROF. L. T. TOWNSEND, Boston, Mass.

Dear Sir,— By the kindness of a friend I have had the pleasure of reading your address before the Boston Preachers' Meeting, published in the *Daily Traveller*.

Please accept my sincere thanks. I heartily sympathize, and approve all that you said, and hope it may be put into the hands of every General Conference delegate. Will it appear in pamphlet or book form?

I venture to give you one or two pointers. *One year* ago in the Southern Conferences (almost unanimously colored) the vote was overwhelmingly negative on "the woman question." *In June*

last, at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Freedmen's Aid Society in this city, the four or five colored ministers present said, "We want and we *expect* to *have* a colored bishop and a secretary in every board." *Now* the vote in those Conferences on the woman question is overwhelmingly *affirmative*. What does this signify?

The *Western* (*Christian Advocate*) now favors the election of a colored bishop. At the recent session of the Louisiana Conference there were everywhere expectation and exultation over the prospective election of Dr. Albert to the Episcopacy. I do not assert that we shall have a colored bishop, but before May 1st every *bartering* office-holder and office-seeker will be in line, and the vote will surprise the unwary and startle the church at large, and all brought about by a combination. You seem to know something of the barters and bargains made by and with the colored brethren in the General Conference of 1884 and 1888, and whose results covered the cheeks of Methodists with blushes all over the land. Our secretaries know all about that sort of politics and are ready for barter, if they may get what they want. And the colored brother knows it. I was a (lay) delegate in 1884, and I saw more than I want to see again.

Have you noticed that the General Conference always elects two or three times as many bishops as the bishops deem necessary? This is plainly owing to combinations of candidates and their friends. It is always easier to elect five than two. Officialdom for several quadrenniums has ruled the church and conducted the General Conferences, chosen officers and spent the money, as they willed. In each succeeding quadrennium their ratio of members (the office-holders in General Conference) has steadily increased. Have you thought of this reform? To wit: Exclude from membership in General Conference every office-holder and employer? This would give relief to the church, and cannot come too soon. Delay may make it impossible.

From a subsequent letter written by his same layman we quote the following words:—

March 30, 1892.

I reaffirm all that I wrote you. I can substantiate it, and will not evade any responsibility involved in my assertions.

I wish to thank you again for calling attention of the church to the evident state of affairs. It is evidently a painful duty, but I see no other way to turn the tide. Making it public, even though the outside public may be listening, seems to be the only method to reform the practices now so prevalent. The body of the church is reluctant to believe that preachers can be selfish, or have sinister motives or worldly ambitions. But both ministry and membership are fast waking up to the fact that many ministers (though supposed to be consecrated to the work of the gospel) are, and some have been for years, seeking and striving to get offices in the church, one-half of which are secular and only secular. As to methods, the participants are so artful as to escape the observation of the inexperienced.

At the ecclesiastical or official centers, such as New York, Cincinnati, Chicago, etc., schemes, plans, barters, combinations, attitudinizing, etc., are so visible he must be a fool indeed who cannot read, and outsiders read it more quickly than do the unwilling members.

He who, with opportunities to know, denies it, condemns himself. Who can deny it who witnessed the scheming and planning during and before the session of 1880, or is informed about the deal in 1884, whereby two, if not three, of the bishops were elected and the colored brother secured the resolution on the color line, by which (latter) has sprung all our embarrassment and duplicity at Chattanooga (from the effect of which the church may never escape), or is informed of the combination and cunning strategy and the artful ways of the ballot in 1888 which put a lasting blush on the cheek of every true Methodist?

I would not assert that every office-holder has been guilty of a barter, or has been elected through a barter by his friends. Indeed I know several who would not do the former or submit knowingly to the latter.

The next letter in order is from a Methodist lawyer with whom we have not the honor of a personal acquaintance, but from certain references in his letter we infer that he is a man of high standing in our church who has studied carefully and thoughtfully the various problems involved in the government of our Methodist affairs.

March 8, 1892.

REV. LUTHER T. TOWNSEND, BOSTON.

My Dear Sir, — Your address on "Clerical Politics" (published February 10, in *Zion's Herald*) has just reached me from Santa Barbara, Cal., and I have read it with much interest. It covers a field I have thought of (and studied) very much, and I am very sorry to say the evil is so common that if I were ignorant of it I would shut my eyes and ears and keep them closed. An Annual Conference was held in this city not long since. The presiding Bishop stayed at my home. The one thing apparent to me, above everything else, was the fact that this Bishop never thought of *principle*, but everything was done as a matter of *policy*.

I do not think there is a remedy. It is easier to build a new house than repair an old one, and you get a better building. Wesley's church was all right, with Wesley's kind of men to work it. With good men in the ministry there is nothing better than our polity; with bad men in it, there is nothing worse. Denominational differences are becoming small matters.

A very important thing in the reform of these evils is to get rid of "Church papers." Abolish them all. Let individuals furnish the capital, brains, and piety for all needed papers in the church. Then all these questions will be laid open to the light of day. I thank you for what you have said.

Another layman in a New England Conference writes to us these words, which call attention to the same evil as is pointed out in the last communication: —

March 4, 1892.

L. T. TOWNSEND, S.T.D.

Respected Sir, — I write to express my commendation of your recent address before the Boston Preachers' Meeting on "Clerical Politics in the Methodist Episcopal Church." I regard it as timely, fairly stated, pungent, and wise. The subject needs ventilation and agitation. It is the rock on which the church will break. Worldliness is the root of the whole matter. It is the mad gallop after riches and worldly honors. A bishop has a pet scheme; he needs contributions to advance it; the preacher who favors it and the wealthy layman have a strong pull on that bishop. It is a sad day for a church when its management falls into such hands. Were it not for trespassing on your valuable time I might write you a long chapter of incidents coming under my own observation displaying manipulations as *cursed* as any ever performed by Tammany Democrats. As a layman I hope soon to see them receive the just condemnation which they so much deserve.

The following letter is from a highly esteemed layman, the cashier of a National Bank, who for forty-five years has been an official member in the M.E. Church: —

February 16, 1892.

PROFESSOR L. T. TOWNSEND, D.D.

Dear Brother, — Your address before the Boston Preachers' Meeting on "Clerical Politics" I have read with intense interest, and am much gratified that you have so boldly exposed a most contemptible practice engaged in by many, who by their holy calling should be above such selfish, un-Christian conduct.

My position as an official member of the Methodist Episcopal Church during the past forty-five years has enabled me to observe some of the *inside* workings, and I can bear witness to much that you have portrayed.

I cannot agree with our esteemed Dr. Parkhurst that the presiding elders are *innocent*. From my knowledge of them I regard them as a class equally guilty. Your exposé must be productive of much good. It certainly will serve as a warning to all these evil doers. They will now realize that they are being looked after.

Your quotation from Paul Penniman of the young preacher and presiding elder recalls to my mind a similar case in Dover in obtaining as pastor J. M. Buckley (now Dr.) thirty-two years ago. The then presiding elder, also the bishop, entertained the same ideas as those of the presiding elder mentioned by Penniman. But our determined effort for the *right* secured him. There are many other important details connected with our experience with clerical politicians, but it is not convenient at this time to state them.

Ordinarily it requires a long time to bring about a great reform in church or state, but it is evident to my mind that if the resolution that you propose to submit to the New England Conference could be acted upon by all of the Annual Conferences, and also the resolution of ex-Governor Evans in the General Conference, this contemptible practice would be nearly annihilated. I hope you will continue the good work of correcting this abominable evil.

On behalf of the laymen of the M.E. Church, you will please accept thanks for the complimentary allusion to them as contained in the following language: "If the clergy were free from political craft and taint the laymen hardly would be tempted to wrong doing in the matter of church government." This is not very complimentary to the shepherds of the flock. Of course some of our lay brethren descend to the low methods of log-rolling, wire-pulling, etc., etc., to obtain high position in the church, but I have yet personally to know of one.

A thoroughly educated man in middle life, connected with a weekly paper that has a circulation larger, perhaps, than that of any other paper in this country, writes thus: —

February 16, 1892.

My Dear Dr. Townsend: —

I want to thank you personally and heartily for your splendid protest against "Clerical Politics." It is timely, and cannot be gainsayed or misunderstood. Your voice will find a *thousand echoes* in the hearts of loyal Methodists everywhere, who love the church but have no song when they think on these things.

The writer of the next letter is the president of a large city bank, the author of several entertaining books on travels, a lecturer who is well informed in civil and ecclesiastical matters. He is, however, a member of a Congregational Church in one of the largest of our Western cities. His name is Hon. F. E. Sessions, of Columbus, O. In this letter he says: "Dr. Gladden, our pastor, tells me that every little while he has a call from Methodist ministers wanting to come to the Congregational Church. Last communion he received a very bright Methodist young man who has gone to work in one of our missions. Dr. Gunsaulus, now of Chicago, whom you know, came into our Church

from the Methodists. He was disgusted with "clerical politics." He is now one of the ablest and most popular preachers in the country, and receives $10,000 a year salary."

At this point some one would interrupt me, were it proper to do so, saying that no Methodist Church can afford to pay such a salary, and that these men of ability leave us because of the larger salaries offered. Several things might be said in reply.

1. If affairs go on as they are now going, few, if any, Methodist Churches ever will be able to pay large salaries.

2. Might it not be wise to give attention to some things that would increase the paying ability of our churches, since most of our ministers are not over-salaried, instead of scolding those outside of our communion who receive large remuneration for their services?

3. The majority of those who decry clergymen that leave our church, as is charged, for larger salaries do not speak intelligently, for they never have been tempted themselves by such offers.

4. It may be questioned whether it is proof of disloyalty to Christ when a preacher leaves one evangelical denomination and joins another, though influenced somewhat by the thought that he will receive for compensation enough to make his family comfortable, and keep his own soul and body together. On this subject there is much holy horror going the rounds that is far more sanctimonious than charitable and pious.

5. When a minister gives a reason for his doings it is mean and slanderous to attribute to him some other motive unless the evidence for it is unmistakable.

But we must continue with our evidence.

The letter to which we next call attention, though from a clergyman, we classify among this grouping for the reason that it contains a note from a judge belonging to our church, whose fame, is not only national but international, and whose labors in various ways has brought no small degree of honor to the name of Methodism.

February 20, 1892.

REV. L. T. TOWNSEND, D.D., BOSTON, MASS.

Dear Dr., — I wish to express to you my entire sympathy with your position concerning ecclesiastical politics. From all that I can learn, your statements are not exaggerated. *Something has got to be done.* I do hope your voice may reach the ear of the church. I have persuaded Judge —— to furnish you an account of an occurrence at our last Annual Conference which I mail with this note.

The following is the account received from the judge: —

March 1, 1892.

DR. TOWNSEND: —

Brother ——, who was just speaking to me of your address on "Church Politics," desires that you should be made aware of a fact coming under my observation. I was at the time being voted for as delegate to General Conference.

While the balloting for lay delegates was going on I had retired to another part of the church in which the Conference was held, not desiring to take any part in it for the reason above stated. A minister, a member of the Annual Conference, came and sat by me and soon began to speak of a man who was also being balloted for. He said that he had been "running his canvass for him." "You know," said he, "he is worth from three to six millions; he is an old lumberman who wants to go to General Conference just for the honor of the thing. There is no knowing what the church may get out of him if we just work him right. I told him that if he would just *double his missionary subscription* we would send him, and I've been at work for him ever since."

He went on to tell me what he had done. The striking thing about the matter is the man's utter unconsciousness that his course was not entirely commendable. The candidate's views, purposes, ability, were of no consequence whatever, — the only thing to be considered was *what the church could make out of him if he were well encouraged.*

This is not exactly the sale of indulgencies, but it is precisely equivalent to the *sale of benefices* against which the statutes of *præ-mu-ni-re* were framed.

It seems to me that between the worship of mammon, church politics, and the irrepressible yearning to secure the approval and countenance of the Church South, the devil ought to be quite satisfied with the tendencies and progress of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Is it possible, my brethren, that ministerial ethics through the blinding and benumbing effects of clerical politics have fallen into such degradation among us as to merit this rebuke from the legal profession? This being the case, need we longer be surprised that laymen of distinction are leaving Methodist folds for those of other Christian communions? May not this blunted condition of the ethical perceptions of some of our ministers and editors, who have been a long time at this miserable work, account for their inability to discover anything out of the way even when resort is had to measures that business and professional men would brand as almost criminal?

Passing now from these words of laymen, though we have quoted not a tithe of what we have received from this source, let us next call attention to a few communications from Methodist educators in different parts of our country.

From the president of one of our higher schools of learning came this letter: —

February 11, 1892.

DEAR BROTHER TOWNSEND:—

Permit me to thank you for your timely and excellent paper in the last *Zion's Herald*. It will do good.

Not long ago, I passed an evening with a college graduate, a student from a theological seminary (I think not a theological graduate), a grand fellow, destined to a good record in all lines of our work as teacher or preacher. He had been asked for by a Methodist Church which loved him and had prospered under his care as a supply, but could not have him because of some such *reasons* as you have named in your discussion. Had not this been a man full of true Methodism, he would have been lost to us.

The following letter is from one of the leading educators in the Methodist Episcopal Church: —

MY DEAR BROTHER:—

I want to tell you how I enjoyed (?) your Preachers' Meeting paper, "Clerical Politics," in *Zion's Herald*. It was "splendid." I can't quite say "enjoyed," either, for the facts are not enjoyable — but the presentation of them was.

I rejoice in your keen sword and courage to use it. I sympathize most heartily with all you said.

In reply to the request made to use the professor's name he wrote me, "Certainly, and I wish there were more weight in it! It should all be against the machine in church or state. When I was in New York in 1888 (General Conference), I saw enough to *make me sick*."

A man of rare ability, who is at the head of one of our most promising universities, a former graduate of our School of Theology, writes thus in defense of its professors: —

MY DEAR DOCTOR:—

May I bear emphatic witness to the entire loyalty of my old teachers in the School of Theology to Methodism? It so happened that to me as to many others while in the school, the

opportunity came to change my church relations. The opportunity was a most attractive one. The committee stood at the door as I stepped from the platform with my diploma in my hand.

They offered me twice what I knew I should receive in my own church in Ohio. Now all this is unimportant except as it gives me opportunity to say that in all that led up to that event my teachers gave me but one kind of advice. I do not say that their advice held me to Methodism for I probably should not have left it. But every one of them, Dr. Warren, Dr. Latimer, and yourself particularly, gave me the same counsel. For three years I knew, as well as any one, probably, the sentiment of the school. There was often restlessness among us, which was quieted again and again by the faculty.

I cordially and emphatically resent any imputation against your own loyalty to Methodism, or the loyalty of my alma mater. Once, in my own Conference, an attack was made upon our school because of the number of men who had left our church. It was then my pleasure to defend our schools and to call attention to the men who are kept in the church by the schools, who would be driven out for such reasons as your correspondents have named, but for the influence of faculties like your own.

One of our former students who is now traveling and studying abroad to fit himself, as we understand, for a professorship, who could to-day command in other denominations larger churches, and in educational work a larger salary, than he can for years expect in Methodism, writes thus: —

LONDON, ENGLAND, March 3, 1892.

PROF. L. T. TOWNSEND, D.D.

My Dear Brother, — *Zion's Herald* has just brought me the report of your magnificent address before the Boston Preachers' Meeting. Perhaps it is a little severe in some directions, but I felt like shouting "*bravo*" across the wide Atlantic. The disease needed heroic treatment and received it at your hands.

I rejoiced also that you took occasion to vindicate the School of Theology and yourself from the unjust charges that some of us have had to meet at a distance from Boston. I want to say that

while I never talked with you personally about the matter, your instruction and influence have ever helped to hold me in the Methodist Episcopal Church when invitations and advances have come to me a half dozen times from other denominations, both in the East and the West, from school days to a very recent date.

I love the Methodist Church. I am zealous for her purity. I prize our School of Theology more and more as the years go by. May God bless you for your courageous deed, and save us from the great evil.

The following specific statements are from a Doctor of Divinity and President of a University, who belongs to a Conference in a State west of Massachusetts, but not far from it: —

March 5, 1893.

DEAR DOCTOR TOWNSEND:—

I am not called upon to judge as to the wisdom of the publication of your article on "Clerical Politics" in the *Zion's Herald*, and express no opinion. I write this line to give you a case in point.

In the Conference to which I belong there has not been a man elected to the General Conference for twenty-four years who was not an official, a presiding elder, or a member of a "ring." Yet I presume no one would say that these persons were always the best men to represent the interests of the church. Shortly after I became actively connected with this Conference, a gentleman who was a member of the ring, came to me and made a proposition which involved the following points: —

First, I was asked to join with three brethren in a sort of Conference square of four persons.

Second, These four were to prepare the way for one another, so as to hold in perpetuity the best appointments in the gift of the Conference.

Third, They were to combine so as to secure their own election to the General Conference.

Fourth, They were to control the business of the Conference.

I refused to enter into the arrangement and was told: "Then you will get left." I have thought that since that time an effort, more or less successful, too, has been made to have this prophecy fulfilled.

Among the methods of making votes for General Conference, there were these: —

First, Personal solicitation. One of the ring secured promises of votes enough to elect him while at Chautauqua during the season immediately preceding election of delegates.

Second, One of the ring sought the influence of the elect ladies at Chautauqua whom he thought he might get to influence voters in his favor. I think the ring is at present broken, and yet this year our Conference sends three presiding elders to General Conference; they have but four ministerial delegates, — the fourth is an educator.

This I write that you may know there has been foundation for the criticisms you have offered.

In a subsequent letter, the writer of the above desires to make this fuller statement as to the facts enumerated: —

March 30, 1892.

Chautauqua is the great church politics camping ground of the Erie Conference. This is most natural and the Assembly is, of course, in no way responsible. While at Chautauqua some years ago, the new combination or ring (the word expresses the idea, we have no word which exactly fits the case), was formed. The old ring or agreement had been dissolved. The leader of the new ring did little of the visible work, so far as I am informed. Those who were recognized, at least by the opposition, as his lieutenants, did the work. I was talked with by one of the number, but refused to coöperate. Meantime, they had secured one of my most intimate personal friends, and he, in his new zeal, came to me and made the proposition that I become one of the number of candidates for General Conference. Among the arguments used for the combination were: —

1. Getting elected to General Conference — as before mentioned.

2. Preparing the way for one another on charges so as to continue to hold the best appointments.

I refused to enter into the agreement, when the remark was made, "Then you will get left." I never took this as a threat, but only as a prophecy, since it was the remark of one who has always been my most esteemed friend. It was, however, an

unconscious announcement of the policy (unconscious, perhaps,) of the ring. The author of the remark, before the next General Conference election—I mean the one four year's later than that immediately following this history—became disgusted (I think that is the word) with the ring, and determined to do all he could to break it up. The consequence was that, although while connected with the ring he went to General Conference by a fine vote, when he turned against it he got but twenty-one votes, if I remember correctly. This shows that his prophecy to any one who would not fraternize—"Then you will get left"—was true. He has never been to General Conference since. I want to protect his name in this matter, lest injustice be done to a worthy man who does not and *did not in his heart* believe in rings but entered that one in self-defense. He said the leader of the rings required too much service.

It was at another Chautauqua Assembly that the leader of the same ring asked one of the elect sisters to do something to help his election to General Conference.

I think it was at still another Assembly that one of the same ring (excuse the word, but what shall I say?) got pledges enough to secure his election. This last item comes to me second hand. The others, of course, first hand.

Since the formation of this ring, no person not a member of the same, or a presiding elder, or a minister holding some position out of the regular line of the pastorate, has gone to the General Conference from the Erie Conference. This year the ring is for the first time broken, but there go to the General Conference three presiding elders and one principal of the Conference school—the whole number possible is four.

I have just been talking with a gentleman from this State, a layman, who says that two weeks before the time to elect lay delegates he received a letter from a General Conference officer, whose name he would be ashamed to mention, he occupies so high a position, asking him to seek the election of a delegate that he might be placed on certain committees. He refused, and for the reason that he did not like the way in which the clergy were running politics in the church.

I am willing to place these facts before you, but prefer, at present, at least, not to have my name connected with the discussion. Perhaps at a later date I might consent, if necessary. I shall look with interest at the progress of the discussion.

There is a difficulty which Dr. Chadbourne (see *Zion's Herald*) does not seem to appreciate. The political leaders are so adroit and so successful in working through others, and so innocently unconscious of any action or word on their part not for "the glory of God," that they will not merely deny but express themselves in as strong words as any man can against clerical politics. The leader never never asks any man to vote for him—he is innocent!

In the nature of the case, proof is difficult or impossible—that is, such proof as will satisfy certain minds.

I trust that in some way God will overrule for good.

A member of the New England Conference forwarded to us a package of letters that he had received, growing out of this discussion, from two of which we make quotations. The first belongs in this grouping, and is from a well known professor in a Western State university.

DEAR SIR:—

I desire to express my dissent from the statements of the *Western Christian Advocate* regarding "ecclesiastical politics." Being the son of a Methodist minister who suffered for years from an ecclesiastical tyranny, because he would not become a henchman to it, having seen an honored minister thrust from a good position to a poor one for no assignable cause except to serve the dynasty, and having in recent years heard from many preachers the most bitter denunciations of the present status, I am prepared to believe anything any one says about the matter.

This Conference was run by a lot of cliques at its last session, and I have been told by several ministers that so much cat-clawing and scheming was never known before. Men were put up and "downed" with gusto and alacrity. I hear men constantly talking of being thousand or two thousand dollar men, etc., of others who are "in" with the elder, etc., till I wonder whether there is any good left with us. I hope you will not cease till this Augean stable has not only been cleaned out, but disinfected.

Expressly stipulating that my name and my informant's shall not be mentioned, I wish to state to you, as I have many times thought of doing since the controversy arose, a year or so ago, a veritable climax to all this scalawagery, as it seems

to me. I have hitherto shrunk from stating it; but the article alluded to above (the article of the *Western Christian Advocate*) seems to make it possible. Rev. ——, D.D., of this Conference, now dead, was one of the mildest, most reticent men I ever knew. His influence in this Conference was almost unlimited, though he never asked for it. He never spoke without having something to say. In conversation with him after a certain General Conference of which he was a member (he was a member of several), the subject uppermost in every one's thoughts, the General Conference elections, was alluded to. I shall never forget how, leaning back in his chair, with a face very pale from sickness, but flushing red with indignation as he went on to say that he had never seen such a scandalous use of trickery and logrolling as he had witnessed in the preceding May; that henchmen of candidates were about and known as such to any one who cared to know anything, and *that he had seen one of them paying money for votes for a certain candidate, who was elected on the next ballot.* This statement he reiterated with emphasis on my expressing astonishment at such a possibility. It seemed to me that this was the end of what might be expected, and I now give this to you as an encouragement to your assaults on this citadel of iniquity among us, the church political machine.

The foregoing words, which certainly are as severe as anything we have said, are from some of the educators, university professors and presidents, whose membership is in the Methodist Episcopal Church.

The next grouping of letters is made up of those which have been received from pastors who are distant from New England. They are men of promise and prominence whose words should remove all doubt as to the existence of the evils against which we have tried to sound an alarm.

A young man of far more than ordinary promise, now holding an important appointment in the West, writes thus: —

February 19, 1892.

My Dear Dr. Townsend: —

I thank you for that speech of yours, published in *Zion's Herald* of February ten. It is true; that is the saddest part of it. Our Western Conferences are far worse than the Eastern. What I have seen out here has taken away my confidence in Methodist ministers. I have had an official position (Member General Board of Control of the Epworth League), and what I have seen even among our younger clergy makes my heart ache. God bless you for publishing that eye-opener.

For over a year I have been thinking of leaving my dear old church on this very ground. Many of our brightest young men in the West are contemplating the same thing. I love the Methodist Episcopal Church, but this awful condition of things makes me sick. With kindest regards, and hoping every one of the ministers may get your speech.

The letter from which we next quote is from a preacher who has held prominent appointments in one of our Southwestern Conferences. He writes that "political scheming and red tape are everywhere in our church as well as in the General Conference," and that he, too, is sick of it. He also writes that he is strongly tempted to accept the pastorate of a Congregationalist Church in New England that is now open to him. Some of our preachers doubtless will say to him, "Go, if you desire; we can survive without you." That is not, however, our advice. We shall write him, as we have said to others, "Stay and fight this evil until our church is freed from it, or until our commission expires, or until despair shall palsy our efforts."

We make the following quotation from this letter: —

February 20, 1892.

My Dear Dr. Townsend: —

Your sentiments and expressions on "Clerical Politics" are only too true, and the severe attack upon you in the *Western Christian*

Advocate of this week, shows, on its face, the existence of such facts as you state.

What about the election of Bishops ——— and ———, the latter especially? There is a vast amount hidden in that case which is ruinous as well as outrageous if what those who were on the inside say is true.

I sympathize with your utterances. They are timely, and the resentment they have stirred seems to me to show that they have struck home in *quarters least expected*, and have caused men to lead us to read between their lines, that a flying arrow has struck a vital spot. And I am somewhat surprised at the indirect confession. There is a pleading of guilt written all over the *Western Christian Advocate's* article.

The letter to which we now call attention is from one of the Central Western States, written by a Methodist minister, a Doctor of Divinity, who is the president of the National Association of Old Army Chaplains, and, therefore, has no fear.

February 2, 1892.

Dr. L. T. Townsend,

Dear Brother,— I see that you "stirred up" some parties last Monday according to the enclosed clipping (from the Associated Press). No doubt about the demand for such work as I think. It is fearful at times and in places! I wish you could put your paper into shape that it could be sent out to the General Church, and let all have the advantage of it. Of course all would not like it. A great many men do not like to be exposed to the light, or have their doings made manifest. Honesty has no occasion to be "stirred" up when the facts are told. If these things are *not* so why get "stirred" up about a falsehood? Innocent men can laugh at a falsehood! It can do no more harm than a fish on land, "let it alone and it will die of itself." I wish the great Methodist Episcopal Church could have *one* General Conference without any foolish striving after office. It would be a *new* thing.

The following is a letter from one of the most promising of our graduates, who, after the completion of his studies with us, supplemented his course in European

universities. He is now a member of one of our Western Conferences: —

February 14, 1892.

Prof. L. T. Townsend, D.D., Boston, Mass.

Dear Professor,— I have just read your interesting article on "Clerical Politics," and wish to thank you for its utterances. I especially wish to express my regrets that any such unjust insinuations have been made against your work, as your article implies. There are hundreds of young men in the church ready to resent any such implications, and to affirm that no one could be more loyal to Methodism in its teachings than you have been. I am profoundly convinced that what the church has lost by many of our brightest young men going into other communions is the fault of the church itself. I, myself, have had experiences which were not at all pleasant, and, indeed, may say, I have received my promotions in spite of the bishop rather than through him. By this I mean that we have some laymen out here who now take things into their own hands, and will not be refused. And this is one of the serious evils of the present condition of things. When churches begin to feel they cannot trust their interests in the hands of the appointing powers, but must represent themselves by committees at Conference who shall look after their rights, our whole system is brought into disrepute among the people. Unrest and disturbance are the sure results. We are not only losing promising ministers, but we are losing most helpful laymen because of this state of things. I trust that the fire you are kindling in New England will spread over the entire church, and effectually put an end to intrigue and "wire-pulling."

The letter from which we next quote is the second of the two already mentioned taken from the package sent us by a friend of reform (see page 85). It is from the pen of one of our most worthy preachers in a Central Western Conference: —

February 27, 1892.

Dear Brother:—

Dr. Townsend is justified in all he says. I can see little hope of reform unless our bishops can, with unimpeached lips, denounce and, as far as they can, crush out this "ring" business. Dare

they do it? From what I have heard from lips, now episcopal, I fear some of them lack the courage to face this issue.

Against my repeated protest, seven years ago a committee appointed me to speak in Conference on the "State of the Church." In the speech I said this, among other things: "It is well known to the Conference, that members in the interest of their own ambitions, have resorted to methods, which, if resorted to in civil life, would, on conviction, land them in the penitentiary.

The speech was made in the evening, and the next morning about a dozen members of Conference in a body assailed me roughly and said, "You ought to be expelled from the Conference," etc. At last I said, "Brethren, in all candor, do you not *know* that every word I said last night is *true?*" The response was, "Yes; but you ought not to have told it, it will injure the church." With a little irony I closed by saying, "I thank you, brethren, for your idea of principle; it is not sin *to do* wrong, but the sin consists in letting it be *found* out. My opinion is, that at the judgment day *all* will be found out." I spoke before the Conference seventy-five minutes, and to this day no man has questioned a single statement I made.

Somebody must tell the facts, even though the revelation plunges all Methodism into a valley of shame; it must be done, for the purer *lights* beyond can only be reached by that route. Pure Methodism, the mightiest of all evangelical agencies; impure Methodism, the weakest. God bless you, comes from the heart of —.

This writer, in a letter replying to our request for the use of his name, gave us additional facts which would blanch the cheek of some of our officials were they published to the world.

Coming nearer home we will quote from letters written by men belonging to the different New York Conferences.

From a preacher who in the Chautauqua School of Theology took high rank, and who now holds an excellent appointment in our church, the following words were received: —

February 13, 1892.

To L. T. Townsend, D.D.

Dear Brother,— You may, on seeing my name, recall the fact that, as a student in the C.S.T., I pursued the course in Homiletics under you as Dean of that department. It is not in relation to Homiletics that I now address you, but to thank you that, having the facts, you had the courage to expose a great and growing evil in our church. I refer to your address delivered before the Preachers' Meeting and published in *Zion's Herald.* It is too bad when existing conditions are such that one is justified in making such an arraignment of men and measures. You have drawn the picture of more than one Annual Conference. "'Tis true, and the pity 'tis, 'tis true." It may be difficult to gather evidence that would convict these "fellows," but one wants no better evidence, that which amounts to proof in one's own case, than to know that, having caused the displeasure of some few men (?) who hold the reins of power, one has been "boycotted." It takes all individuality and independence out of many a young minister. They become fawners and time-servers. They know that they will "lose their heads" if they do not favor certain men. They dare not vote according to their convictions through fear. They know they are watched. Rather than suffer martyrdom they take off the crown of manliness, cast it down, and trample it in the dust. They are "reserved"; that is, they will have no convictions of their own until they see which side "certain men" take.

But I must not continue on in this strain. I sat down to thank you simply for your excellent and timely address, and for what you have done and propose to do in the way of reform, and not to give a dissertation myself. I could not refrain from writing, for I could interpret so much of your address in the terms of my own experience. I wish more of our ministers would make the prayer of consecration Wendell Phillips did, and live up to it: "If a thing be wrong, it may have no power of temptation over me; if a thing be right, it may take no courage to do it." Then we would see a speedy revolution in our churches and Conferences, — Annual and General.

I wish that ten thousand copies of your address might be printed and circulated. The number who is with you is "legion."

Within two weeks we wrote to one of the noblest preachers in Methodism to verify certain facts to which

some of our students had called attention. The preacher is just elected to General Conference and leads his delegation.

March 31, 1892.

DEAR DR. TOWNSEND:—

In answering your inquiries, I have to say that your information is mainly correct, except as to dates. It was in the autumn of 1871 that I was asked by a special friend of a prominent member of the Conference to which I then belonged, whether I would vote for the latter for bishop, if I should be a delegate to the ensuing General Conference? I answered, I would not. When asked why, I answered, in substance, that I had no feeling other than friendly toward him, believed he was the right man for the General Conference office which he then held, but being constitutionally a partisan, was unfit for a bishop. Thereupon, I was told by the same party that my position would defeat my election as delegate. I answered, Be it so, I will do nothing under a threat. I was defeated, although the prospect of my election had been regarded by the Conference, generally, as extremely favorable. Afterwards I told one of the close friends of this candidate that he and his friends could not afford to take the position, namely, that they would crush every man who declined to support his ambition; that it would defeat him; that, in this case I had it in my hands to defeat him, and meant to do it. Accordingly, without making any attack upon him of a personal character, I simply stated the cause of my defeat to two or three delegates whose support was necessary to his success. That they could not have elected him, the event proved, but their support being withheld, his vote was surprisingly small. Eight years later the same parties made a most bitter and relentless fight against my election as delegate, on the same lines; and, although I was elected to "lead the delegation," and was not a candidate for any office or honor in the gift of the General Conference, they resorted to most strenuous efforts to disparage me with members of the General Conference, as some of them, one now a bishop, afterwards told me. Of course, all this so thoroughly disgusted me with "church politics" and "politicians" that I have, ever since, turned my back upon everything of the kind. Yet I rejoice that our church holds the foremost rank in promoting conscious salvation among men, notwithstanding these parasites.

A stranger to us, a member of one of the New York Conferences, who holds an important appointment, speaks words that should not pass unheeded:—

February 10, 1892.

PROF. L. T. TOWNSEND,

Honored Brother,—Pardon a stranger for venturing to address you.

In the current issue of the *Western Christian Advocate* I read an editorial reflecting severely on some recent utterances of yours in reference to "Clerical Politics." I am not a reader of *Zion's Herald*, and hence do not know what you said in its entirety, but from the extracts reprinted in the *Western* I take it you must have said a few things that *needed saying*. There is not an intelligent Methodist preacher or layman in the country but *knows* that influences are at work which are a disgrace to Methodism, and which will bring us to disintegration unless they are overcome. I mention; *First*, The way many presiding elders have of getting elected to General Conference by "lording it over God's heritage," and letting the average preacher get the impression that it will be to his interest to vote for his presiding elder.

Second, A way General Conference officers have of catering to popular fads in a reptilian fashion in order to secure the support of various sections, as Negroes, Germans, etc, etc.

And, *Third*, Those combinations which are made at General Conferences by aspirants to office, such as this: "If our man cannot be elected yours shall not be," etc. Dr. Moor insinuates that such things are mere rumor and gossip, but while his denial of the facts may silence the rank and file, they do not satisfy thinking people. But I started simply to express to you my sympathy, and not to write a letter.

The words of few men should have more weight than the following from an honored member of the New York East Conference:—

February 11, 1892.

REV. LUTHER T. TOWNSEND, S.T.D.

My Dear Dr.,—I have just finished the reading of your outspoken address on "Clerical Politics," etc. I cannot resist the

impulse to send a word of hearty endorsement. You have not overdrawn the picture. It has been my good fortune, for a number of years, to enjoy the acquaintance and friendship of not a few of the grandest men, lay and clerical, in our church. The feeling of "irritation and unrest" you so forcibly depict, harmonizes perfectly with my own observation. *Personally*, I have nothing to complain of, but my whole being has revolted time and again at the despicable methods of the Conference politician.

Twice I have been "almost persuaded" to accept flattering offers of a pastorate in another denomination, solely on account of this growing evil.

There are other evils from which Methodism must purge herself, or she will lose a still larger percentage of her promising men. Look at the list of delegates elected to the coming General Conference, and observe how meagerly the *pastorate* is represented. I question if our delegation (N.Y. East) will contain more than *one* man from the pastorate.

I am glad you have spoken. I could give you a scheme now concocting in our Conference that should bring shame to the soul of a man of honor. Your timely words may kill it or reduce its influence.

The following letter is from a Doctor of Divinity, an author of several books, and a member of the Society of Biblical Archæology of London, and is a pastor of many years standing in our church.

February 20, 1892.

PROF. L. T. TOWNSEND, BOSTON UNIVERSITY.

Dear Brother, — As an (old Concord) alumnus of your School of Theology, I offer you my unfeigned and hearty thanks for your address on "Clerical Politics in the Methodist Episcopal Church." It is a bold, truthful, and effective presentation of the subject. I am *profoundly thankful* that you have so faithfully sounded the alarm, and so mercilessly exposed the duplicity of the men who are bringing our Methodism into disrepute among the churches of the land. You never said a truer thing than in your reference to the widespread and increasing discontent on the part of our best pastors with the ring-management and bossism of our General and Annual Conferences. I have had, as perhaps you may know, exceptional advantages for knowledge on this subject, in the East, Middle-West, and for four years recently on the Pacific Coast; and I assure you I am troubled when I remember by what a slender tie many of our most brilliant and useful clergymen are now held to us by reason of their disgust with this evil and the strength it has developed in high places. I implore you, do not let this matter drop, but *lead the crusade* against all self-seeking office-seekers amongst us. If the Methodist Episcopal Church continues to work out her *highest* mission in the land, she must persistently magnify the pastoral office, minify "Church Politics" and so-called "official place" with its ecclesiastical emoluments. If you want any help at any time in any practical measures, just call for it, and there are hundreds of strong men who will quickly respond.

We see eye to eye in this thing. Let me add that in my judgment the *very worst* result of the evil under consideration is the increasing tendency of many of our otherwise faithful, though not brilliant preachers, to curry favor with, and follow the lead of presiding elders, secretaries, etc. This is degrading, not to say demoralizing, and lowers the tone of our pastoral office, while it prejudices against our ministry many noble young men who do their own thinking, and who propose to be *independent men*, even if they are preachers of the gospel. Pardon me for taking so much of your time.

The next letter is from an ex-Methodist minister who has had opportunities for extended observation, a man who is above reproach or suspicion. Indeed, few kinder, nobler, or cleaner men are known to us. His former connection with a large New York Conference entitles his letter to a place in this connection.

February 20, 1892.

MY DEAR DR. TOWNSEND:—

I have just finished reading the complete copy of your paper on "Clerical Politics in the Methodist Episcopal Church" as published in *Zion's Herald*.

I want to congratulate you, — first, on its boldness and fearlessness; and second, on its *truthfulness*. I claim to have had some-

what unusual opportunities for observation in these matters for several years, as a Conference secretary of one of the largest of our Conferences. I aver that your picture, *strong* as it is in shading and coloring, is not overdrawn. I am glad that you called a spade a *spade*. It was high time that somebody did it. In my judgment you have never done the dear old church a better service than in this paper, in which you have boldly and faithfully held up the mirror that shows her one of her most grievous faults and most baleful tendencies. You have also fully cleared yourself of all suspicion of being in any way connected with the going out from Methodism of many members of your Theological School. Nor is this *hegira* confined to the *young* men, but I personally know many men, from forty-five to fifty years of age, who have been for years prominent and successful, who only wait an *opportunity*.

How this *plain talk* of yours will be received remains to be seen. I greatly fear, however, that it will, so far as possible, be smothered, and will bring upon you the combined open and oftener *secret* attacks of men now in position and power, who have gained their place by the use of the very methods you expose; and of other unscrupulous ones who hope for preferment by the use of the same agencies. I am convinced that if Methodism does not speedily purge herself of these unholy practices, her great machinery will ere long *break* in pieces.

Perhaps at this point better than at any other we may introduce two letters from graduates of our School of Theology, who, in addition to those enumerated in our former address have entered the Congregational ministry. These were not mentioned in that address, because at that date the facts in the case were not known to us.

February 4, 1892.

Rev. Prof. Townsend.

My Dear Professor, — By the last mail I received a letter from the Rev. ——, of Boston University School of Theology, asking me to write you in regard to the reasons why I changed from the Methodist Episcopal to the Congregational Church. Let me say in reply that although I had supplied for two years the pulpit of a Congregational Church, still I fully expected to enter Conference in the spring of 1890. Having lived always, until I came to Boston, in the New York Conference, I was finally persuaded to join there. I wrote the presiding elder who would be most likely to know of me, and received a very encouraging letter which led me finally to decide upon that Conference. I was received into Conference in the regular way with many tokens of pleasure on the part of the various committees before whom I came. Let me say here that as to my expectations in regard to an appointment, they were not extravagant. I hoped for a place where I could have a salary of perhaps six hundred dollars and a parsonage, as I expected to be married. The presiding elder was not besieged by letters or anything else, but I simply told him that I expected a place where I could live. Without consulting me at all I was appointed to a place which would barely pay a salary of three hundred and fifty dollars. Inasmuch as several whom the Conference refused to admit as members received as supplies far better places I felt illy used, snubbed, and hurt. I refused to go to the place, and returned to Boston. The presiding elder later said, "It is time that the young men who have attended school learn that they are not to expect any favors." I did not expect or ask for favors, and I learned his lesson also and got out of that school.

Though I knew this was the act of one presiding elder largely, the others of course were concerned in making the appointment; still it gave me a sample of what might be expected anywhere. I began to look about, and with this result, that I was in the fall of that same year settled where I am now.

Of this young man's preaching ability and scholarship we *cannot* speak too highly, and yet he is needlessly lost to our church, because a presiding elder thought it necessary to humiliate him.

The second of these two letters, from former graduates who are now Congregational clergymen, is from a young man who was most highly esteemed while in our University, and who passed not from our school to Congregationalism, but from a Western Methodist Conference: —

February 8, 1892.

REV. L. T. TOWNSEND, D.D.

My Dear Doctor, — I have just read in the Saturday *Evening Traveller* your address on "Clerical Politics" before the Boston Methodist Preachers' Meeting, and as one of your former students I wish to express my humble appreciation of the same. I was born of earnest Methodist parents, was brought up in that church, was educated in two of her institutions — viz., Northwestern University and Boston School of Theology, — belonged to one of her Conferences for seven years — the Michigan — and have three brothers in her ministry at the present time.

I am now, however, a Congregationalist, and pastor of a Congregational Church. And why? Not because I did not and do not love the Methodist Church. I love her sincerely, and pray for her greatest prosperity. I am truly proud of the noble work she has accomplished for God and humanity. But during my short experience as a member of a Methodist Conference I was made painfully conscious of the corrupting tendencies of which you speak. Perhaps it was my misfortune to be a member of what the late Bishop Harris was pleased to designate as one of the worst wire-pulling Conferences in the connection. There came to me, unsolicited and unsought, what I believed to be a Providential opening, to become pastor of a Congregational Church. I accepted it in Christ's name, and here I am, thankful every day since for the step I have taken. I trust your paper may mark the beginning of better things along the lines you have touched in the grand old Methodist Church, and that your prayer for her purity and prosperity may be abundantly answered. Thanking you for this paper, I have the honor to subscribe myself.

The letter which we next present affords additional evidence in support of our statement that Methodist preachers, more numerously than we could wish, are leaving us for the pulpits of other denominations: —

March 31, 1892.

DR. LUTHER T. TOWNSEND, BOSTON, MASS.

Dear Sir, — I want to give you a word of encouragement and sympathy in this, which may prove to be your day of trial. I am heartily glad and profoundly grateful that God has put it into

your heart to set forth the corruption of the Methodist Episcopal Church through clerical politicians. Not because I wish any evil to come to the church in which I was twice born, but for just the opposite reason. From my earliest recollections I expected to spend my life in the Methodist ministry, — having been consecrated to that work at my birth. At sixteen years of age I definitely determined to prepare for my life work as a Methodist preacher. I prepared for college, — entered and passed through the Northwestern University. Then I studied theology for a part of one year with you in Boston; but returning West, I graduated at Garrett Biblical Institute in 1884, — having preached two years previous to graduation.

I cannot enter into details, they are both long and painful to mention. Suffice it to say that I found the Methodist ministry so utterly different from what I had expected it, I saw so much successful scheming, and so much consecrated faithfulness go unrewarded and even persecuted, that, for a time, I thought my faith in God was going with my faith in the polity of my church. After two years of "trial," with many scalding tears of sorrow and regret (not that *I* was especially ill-treated, for I had first-class appointments), I left the church of my parents, brothers and sisters, to go out and preach the simple gospel unhampered by the ecclesiastical tyranny of the presiding eldership. In the Congregational Association, to which I belonged before I came to Chicago, were *ten* ex-Methodist preachers who have become Congregationalists for the same reason. In the Wisconsin Conference, from which I went to the Congregational denomination, it is well known that the brightest young men (myself not included) have for years been going over to the Congregationalists. We do not love *true* Methodism less because we are not Methodists in an ecclesiastical sense; but, speaking for myself, I have gone out of the church in which I was converted that I might be *free* to preach the gospel as "the power of God unto salvation," escaping that trial, which I could not bear with sweetness and patience, of being *obliged* to become a schemer (as it seemed to me), or else go to the wall.

I believe that in the five years that I have been in the Congregational ministry at least twenty preachers of the Methodist Episcopal Church have said they wished they could get out, and have asked me to help them into Congregational pulpits.

I hope you will go on in your good work till you lay utterly bare this whole carbuncle, and so prepare the way for a more healthful condition of things in the great Methodist Church.

The next letter in order is from the pastor of the strongest Protestant church of any denomination in the State of Wisconsin. He was formerly a Methodist preacher in New York State, was subsequently transferred to a Western Conference, and then became the pastor of the Congregational Church where he still remains: —

March 11, 1892.

PROF. L. T. TOWNSEND.

Dear Brother, — I have just read your paper on "Clerical Politics," and believe every word of it. You have spoken none too soon. I was educated and preached in the Methodist Church until *politics* drove me out of it. I left one of the best churches in the Rock River Conference, where I could have remained the full term, so am not a "sore-head." In this Conference, where I saw the worst side of Methodism, we had a lay politician who worked with the clerical politicians. He was a man of wealth; he controlled a majority of the presiding elders, and so could dictate the delegation to any General Conference. He gave his money just where it would count, and so controlled the action of every bishop who came into the State, and dictated many appointments. When we exercised the common rights of American citizens, we were "scattered." I was taken from a church in Milwaukee, where the desire for my return was unanimous, and sent to another Conference. I simply could not live under "popery," and so made my escape. The three largest Congregational Churches in this State (the State of Wisconsin) are now manned by ex-Methodist preachers who left for like reasons.

I do not say these things because I have any unkind feelings towards Methodism. I love the church, and have in it a host of friends. I glory in its success, and would rejoice to see it modified in its polity in these offensive particulars.

Independent, self-respecting men need not much longer submit to arbitrary, unsanctified authority. Make the church more democratic and let the pastorate become the most honored office in the church.

The reply of Dr. —— to your address is a sample of what you may expect from the other side.

If the church is content with things as they are, I am very sure I am content with my new-found freedom. Thanking you for your independent and manly putting of the question.

The following communication being public property, and from a State noted for its reformers and leaders, we submit in full with dates, names, and place: —

WEST MILLS, MAINE, Feb. 25, 1892.

DEAR BROTHER TOWNSEND: —

By vote of the Augusta District (Maine Conference) Ministerial Association which was held at Skowhegan, Feb. 15 to 17, 1892, I was requested to send you the following extract from the minutes of the secretary.

Yours cordially,

GEO. W. BARBER,
Secretary of the Association.

The following paper was presented by brother E. L. House and on motion was *unanimously* adopted.

SKOWHEGAN, MAINE, Feb. 16, 1892.

To DR. L. T. TOWNSEND.

Dear Brother, — We, the preachers of the Augusta District Ministerial Association, desire to express to you our gratitude for the able, fearless and too true presentation of "Clerical Politics" as published in *Zion's Herald*. We, as a body, commend the paper and pledge you our support and sympathy, and with you will pray for speedy deliverance for our beloved church from such demoralizing practices.

On motion, the secretary was requested to forward a copy of said paper to Dr. Townsend.

We may be permitted to say that we have heard from two other preachers' meetings in New England, which

have expressed sympathy, and without a dissenting voice have pledged support.

We have now reached a grouping of letters from preachers holding appointments in New England. Some of these men as we said before, without hesitation have given us permission to publish their statements and names. Others with fear and trembling have given the same permission, if in our judgment the cause of righteousness thereby would be better promoted. But others could not bring themselves to imperil their Conference standing, or give occasion for anxiety and possible distress to their families. Still in justice to these more conservative brethren, it should be said that they have expressed a willingness, if the exigencies of the case require, to appear before any tribunal, civil or ecclesiastical, and testify as to the facts they have disclosed to us.

There are thirteen of these letters, an unlucky number in the judgment of some of our people, though we never have been able to discover any more unluckiness in thirteen than in any other number. These thirteen letters constitute, however, only a small part of the correspondence received from our New England Methodist preachers. We have concluded, however, to withhold even this part of our correspondence which is already copied and ready for publication. We do this lest some of our brethren should be harmed for what they say, and lest others should be harmed by what is said.

The motives, too, leading us to publish just at this juncture certain specific facts and names very likely would be misinterpreted. We are content, therefore,

to give certain statements from the foregoing source, as evidence in support of the general charge that there are clerical politics even in Puritan New England. For the facts presented we are to be held answerable at the bar of any tribunal before which we may be summoned.[2]

First. A presiding elder in New England said to a prominent Methodist layman, that if he, the layman, would give a certain amount of money ($5,000.00) to found a scholarship in one of our schools there should be sent to the church of that layman a certain preacher whom the said layman desired. That layman treated that proposition as it deserved. The preacher who was desired and could have been secured by this money consideration was sent elsewhere; and that church is in a turmoil to-day.

Second. More than once leading members of the New England Conference have called private caucuses, have invited preachers to be present without at first intimating the purpose of the meeting. The company has been served with cake and ice-cream or dinners; and then, without discussing any grave ecclesiastical questions, or methods of religious work of any kind, have solemnly proceeded to place the names of certain members of the company there present on a ticket which was to be cast the following morning for delegates to General Conference; and also ministers present in those gatherings have been chosen to act as distributors of these prepared ballots in the several aisles of the church where the Conference was holding its session.

Third. A member of the New England Conference, just before the last two General Conference elections, was informed by one who is regarded as a successful Conference worker by what means said member in all probability could secure election to the General Conference. Said member did not avail himself, however, of the means of securing such election.

Fourth. Presiding elders in the New England Conference by letter and by word of mouth have solicited votes from preachers on their districts and have promised for said vote a consideration.

Fifth. A New England presiding elder was put into office through the influence of three other ministers who were to be remembered for this service by said elder in certain ways then designated. Those ministers have been so remembered.

Sixth. A minister offered a presiding elder fifty dollars if he would secure the said minister's appointment to a certain charge. The "elder" expressed regret that he could not so appoint the brother, the reason assigned, however, not being that an impropriety was involved, but that it was then Monday morning and too late to take action, as the assignment of places already had been made.

Seventh. A minister gave a New England presiding elder one hundred dollars to secure for him a transfer to another Conference. That transfer was secured.

Does some one at this point exclaim, I have been a member of Conferences for forty years, and as yet have seen nothing justifying these charges! We rejoice, good brother, if you have not been a witness of these

things. But your negative testimony is of comparatively little weight in face of that which is positive. Forty men might be called into court and swear that they did not see the prisoner at the bar steal a horse. We never saw a horse stolen; yet there are horse thieves in Charlestown State's prison. Negative evidence cannot acquit a person under indictment if two reliable witnesses can testify that they saw the prisoner when he was stealing the horse.

We have given you these authorized facts; we could give you many more, but in order, as far as possible, to lift this controversy above a personal encounter we have made our selection of facts from such sources excluding all others, as enable us to say that no presiding elder, now in office in Boston or vicinity is implicated in any of these charges now before you.

Now, my brethren, in view of the mass of unsolicited correspondence here before us; in view of the letters submitted for your consideration; in view of the charges just enumerated, and in view of the action of several preachers' meetings in and out of New England[3] may we not confidently indulge the hope that those among us, entertaining the opinion that there is, and that there has been, in the management of our church affairs, nothing to occasion anxiety, and that there is no widespread unrest or downright dissatisfaction, will remain no longer under these pleasant delusions, but be enabled to see the perils that certainly threaten our church, and be persuaded henceforth resolutely to stand on the side of reform.

But as some of you are aware a full statement as to

this controversy has not yet been made by us. We have told the truth and nothing but the truth, but not the whole truth. We are therefore led at this point to say that our address of nine weeks ago has been severely criticised as well as commended. While not a single word of dissent as to the correctness of the charges made can be found in any of the letters received, except in one instance, and that dissent was interrogatively put, and is from the pen of a presiding elder, yet the condemnations and even denunciations in some of our church papers are almost *blue*. And but for a clear conscience in the matter we might be led to think that we are the most ill-deserving criminal on the face of the earth.

Those condemnatory editorials, however, being written by General Conference appointees, lose on that account somewhat of their point and weight. While we have neither time nor inclination to give extended and formal replies to those attacks still it might be deemed inexcusable on our part should we neglect to lay before you a vindication, that, unsolicited and, perhaps, under providential direction, has been placed in our hands.

The editorial of the *Pacific Christian Advocate*, Portland, Oregon, of March ninth, was the last to reach us, but is the first to which we call your attention. We are charged in that editorial with over-estimating the evils of clerical politics; with making statements that are not proven; with calling to the stand prejudiced witnesses and witnesses too limited in numbers. The editorial concludes with these words, "The accuser of his brethren should be put on his defense."

Thanking Dr. Harington, the editor, for the complimentary words contained in the introduction of the editorial, we hereby notify him that we cheerfully await charges and specifications, but in the meantime we will read the following letter from a worthy member of one of the Oregon Conferences: —

March 11, 1892.

REV. L. T. TOWNSEND, D.D.

Reverend and Dear Sir, — My attention was called by an editorial in the *Pacific Christian Advocate* of March 9 to an article of yours published in *Zion's Herald* of Feb. 10, on "Clerical Politics." Would you allow me to express the thankfulness in my heart that men are found who will voice plainly the needs of Methodism in *this day?* If you could only know all the details of Conference workings in this Northwest, you would have at command ample materials. Our district was placed in the hands of a brother who I will not allow myself to speak of, further than to say that he used to be a member of this Conference, but such were his habits, that, though he tried to re-transfer, he was rejected by a strong majority. This Conference is now placed in this mans' hands in order that the one who obtained the appointment for him could, by his influence as presiding elder, go to the General Conference.

This chicanery and personal "wire-pulling" carrying from this Conference (to the General Conference) a man with this single leading feature, that he can pull wires "as to the manner born," without other than the commonest education, having no ability as a speaker, outside two or three written sermons, and, worst of all, with no practical depth of personal piety, compel us to ask: What is our Methodism coming to, unless we have those who will stand by early principles and shape our polity so that this chicanery shall be honey-combed, filled with dynamite; and then exploded. I know you are not standing alone; other clear heads have often looked at the cloud "bigger than a man's hand" already. God bless you in your speaking, is the prayer of —.

The editorial to which we next call attention will be found in the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* of February twenty-fifth.

The editor charges us with an ignorant, or a willful, misrepresentation of the condition of affairs among the negroes. He says: —

> Dr. Townsend should either *prove* what he says or submit to be branded as the indiscriminate traducer of his brethren.

We would say first, that the misrepresentation, if there were one, is not ours at all, but is a quotation from a preacher who lives in the South; who is well known to us; whose word is questioned by no one who is acquainted with him, and who is as highly esteemed as is any man within the bounds of any of our Southern States. As a partial vindication of this friend and informer, if he needs vindication and in our own self-defense for having made the quotation in question, if defense is required, we beg leave to present the following letter from a "brother in black" which was called out by the attack on our address in that same *Southwestern Christian Advocate*.

March 3, 1892.

Rev. L. Townsend, D.D., Boston University, Boston, Mass.

Dear Sir, — Enclosed find a clipping from the editorial columns of the *Southwestern Christian Advocate*. Will you be kind enough to enclose and send to my address the original speech or article to which this editorial refers? I am a Methodist and have always been. I am what is known as a negro. I completed a course of study in the University supported by the Freedmen's Aid and Southern Educational Society, and am very sorry I am prepared to say that I know from experience that your informant as to the condition of things here is truthful, and that he did not tell you all. I have felt for years that the situation here was becoming unbearable. Every negro preacher who lifts his voice uncompromisingly against the evils of which you speak, soon or late pays the penalty of his crime. It is a foregone conclusion, or rather a generally accepted fact, that the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* is closed to any and every complaint which is against the "ring-rule" of the church, especially in the *South*.

I have planned to write a series of articles laying the situation squarely before the church. No conscientious, self-respecting man (negro) can remain in any position the church affords in the South, without suffering, from the almost unbearable rule, or rather "Reign of Terror," in the South. I am puzzled as to where I should begin in "airing" this whole matter. I would be under special obligation to you if you could suggest a side of the question that would be most appreciated if written up.

I shall be more than pleased to render any assistance in the form of information that you need, should you decide to substantiate your statements. They are true and the editor of the *Southwestern* is inexcusably ignorant if he does not know *the truth*. Hoping to hear from you at an early day.

This "brother in black" certainly writes a good letter, is an honor to the school that graduated him, and doubtless will give the editor of the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* all needed information if in reality he does not know of the existence of "clerical politics" among the negroes in his section of the country.

The *Pittsburg Christian Advocate* of February twenty-fifth, also, and somewhat vigorously, has paid us its compliments. While we do not care to make a formal reply we shall, nevertheless, allow the president of a college to state a few things for the future consideration of our genial friend, Dr. Smith, the editor of the *Advocate*.

February 25, 1892.

Dr. L. T. Townsend.

Dear Brother, — I notice in this week's *Pittsburg Advocate* that you have been writing about "Clerical Politics." I think Dr. Smith's article does you great injustice and exposes him to the same faults he charges you with. If you wish anything to support you on the subject, this Conference is a fertile field and Dr. Smith is supposed to know as much about it as any one else.

It is a notorious fact that "ring politics" by which many inefficient and unmeritorious persons have been pushed to the front, has cursed this Conference for ten years or more. I know what I have said and am ready to give an answer for my statement when desired. I hope you will not recede an iota. Excuse my intrusion, but I could hardly refrain. My son, now a Congregational minister in ——, would not have been where he is, had he not seen so much of this "ring politics." To lose him from our church was a great trial to me, but all things considered, I could hardly censure him.

If Dr. Smith is totally ignorant of any irregularities in his Conference, we presume this Doctor of Divinity and Doctor of Laws, for such are his titles, will be glad to enlighten him.

The editor who seems to have been the most disturbed, however, is Dr. Moor, of the *Western Christian Advocate.* To his editorial of February seventeenth, we offer no rejoinder except a letter received a few days since from a man who seems to be even better informed on the matters now under consideration than does Dr. Moor, who, up to the date of his late editorial, we may say, had enjoyed the reputation, justly or otherwise, of knowing pretty much everything within the realms of "clerical politics."

March 11, 1892.

Rev. Dr. L. T. Townsend, Boston, Mass.

Dear Brother, — The Rev. Dr. David H. Moor of the *Western Christian Advocate*, as you are, doubtless, informed, in his issue of the seventeenth ult., makes a savage assault upon your "Theological Honor" and your paper before the Boston Preachers' Meeting, and, no less, upon Dr. Parkhurst of the *Herald*, for permitting its publication, *at your instance*, impliedly. Now, my brother, I beg you to stand unflinchingly to your cause, while the clerical politicians thus pour their vials of wrath upon your head.

It was my first impulse, in reading your paper, to send you a vote of thanks. I do this now, and more.

The occasion of this assault can have but one construction, namely, that the assaulter is "in the swim" himself. I am not alone in the belief that the "head and front" of "clerical politics" are to be found in Cincinnati, Ohio; that there the deadly octopus has its nest; with arms reaching to Chattanooga, New York, Chicago, and last, not least of all, to Delaware, Ohio. Ohio, for short, is the seat from which men go forth to the "high places" in the M.E. Church. Walden, Joyce, Cranston, Payne, Moor, Mendenhall, McCabe, and Leonard, are Ohio men. The election of these men to office may be by Providential direction; but, if so, why should Providence be so particularly interested in the Ohio man? I do not think McCabe is of the political fold; but there are reasons for strong suspicions that the others named secured their places through the methods known to the State politician.

The truth is, the work has been done so deftly that it is almost impossible to *prove* the charges if one should be so bold as to make them. Permit me, therefore, to *theorize* a little on facts not generally hinted at: Cranston and Moor, of quite local reputation at the time, took transfer to Colorado; Cranston as presiding elder, and Moor as chancellor (?) of the, then on paper, but now in fact, Denver University. Cranston, comparatively unknown to the church at large, is elected to the Western Book Agency, as successor to J. M. Walden. Upon the death of Dr. J. H. Bayless, of the *Western Christian Advocate*, Moor is chosen as Bayless's successor. How in the name and "impartialness" of Providence did this happen? Moor, immediately prior to his election as editor, was shelved from his Denver chancellorship to take refuge as president of the virgin State University of Colorado. How near to a *Congregational* move was that? These are only two out of the many Providential happenings *here*, — "*out West!*"

Again, it is correctly reported that Dr. —— himself wrote, or caused to be written (Hiphill Conjugation), a thousand letters to secure the office now held by him. Was that, too, one *Moor* Providential interference in behalf of an Ohio man?

Now, dear Doctor, I believe your every statement. I do not think "the half has been told." With a few healthful exceptions, the leaders of our glorious Methodism are bad off, from the clerically political point of view. Now my prayer is, that you may go through the fire unscathed, to come out, seeing the church purified.

' Anything I can do, if you need help from the West, command, and it shall be done.

If Dr. Moor continues to plead ignorance of any considerable irregularity in the matter of clerical politics in the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Western States, this brother who has written us will be of service, as also will several of our brethren in black who just now appear to be in possession of important information.

We already have advertised that we shall offer no formal reply to the New England attack made by our friend and brother eight weeks ago in the neighboring hall, but in view of the fact that a distinguished layman and certain ministerial brethren, from whom we made quotations, were berated, we cannot well do less than to quote in their defense a few words from an editorial of the *Rocky Mountain Christian Advocate* of March tenth. The following is the quotation: —

Zion's Herald of March second contains a reply to Prof. Townsend, read before the Boston Preachers' Meeting by Dr. G. S. Chadbourne, evidently one of the New England presiding elders.

One of our exchanges made the point against Prof. Townsend that he was smarting under recent accusations, hence lacked the necessary calmness to discuss the subject impartially. This is manifestly the case with Dr. Chadbourne. In nearly every paragraph it is evident that, consciously or unconsciously, he is more eager to defend presiding elders than to get at the merits of the question of Clerical Politics. After carefully reading his article we felt that if this is the best that can be said, Prof. Townsend's great strength is in the weakness of his critics.

For instance, Dr. Chadbourne speaks of ex-Governor Evans as Prof. Townsend's "first witness," and disposes of him in the following curt paragraph: —

"I will dismiss this witness with a brief remark. I have unquestionable authority for the statement that the ministers and laymen in the Conference in whose bounds he dwells deny his statements and repudiate the spirit which prompts them."

This is so far from the truth, and the truth so easy of access, even in Boston, that it raises a presumption of untrustworthiness against his subsequent statements. If he had been attempting a careful and impartial investigation instead of a special plea, he could easily have learned that instead of being repudiated at home, Governor Evans was elected last June, without opposition, a delegate to the next General Conference, of which body he has been a member every session since laymen were admitted.

We fancy Dr. Chadbourne would be able to endure that sort of repudiation with equanimity.

The tenor of the Doctor's remarks concerning preachers who have left our pulpits for those of other denominations is one of illy concealed disdain, and over it all may be written "sour grapes."

If, upon so vital a topic as the loss to Methodism of a goodly number of our most promising young men, our leaders in New England have nothing better to offer than sarcastic efforts to belittle the young men, Prof. Townsend's broadside did not come too soon.

We happen to know of some experiences of Western theological students with New England preachers and elders which bear out Prof. Townsend's charges. One young man whose standing in school and since graduation marked him as above the average, has told the writer that he sought repeatedly to converse with presiding elders concerning his chosen life-work, but never did he meet one who manifested the slightest interest, never one, in fact, who did not make him feel that the interview was a bore. In spite of this snubbing by men who ought to have been kind and cordial he came back to his Western home, entered Conference on trial and took work at one-half the salary offered him in Massachusetts by a church of another denomination, and he declares to-day that Prof. Townsend, more than all other men in Boston, influenced him to remain in the Methodist Church.

Dr. Chadbourne and his brethren in New England ought to know that *young* men are of some value to the church, and that they are entitled to cordial treatment. The best of them will not always stand true to the church whose representatives treat them with

coldness or indifference, even though they love her, when sister churches are welcoming them with hearty kindness.

May we not hope, my brethren, in view of these closing words of the *Rocky Mountain Christian Advocate*, which are but a reiteration of those of the many graduates of our school who have spoken, that any one who has been alarmed lest the disloyalty of our university shall send all of her promising theological graduates directly into the pulpits of other denominations, will find occasion for calmness? though we hope the real causes of the exodus of these men will weigh like lead on the conscience of every clerical politician. We may express the hope also that there will be no more assaults on the professors of our school behind their backs, and in the presence of bishops and other church officials; and that no more clerical gossip and political capital which have been current just prior to the last three General Conference elections will be manufactured and circulated to the detriment of the innocent.

But our most serious embarrassment, now that our good friend and co-laborer of the *Zion's Herald* has spoken in defense of the presiding elders, would seem to be that we have done the abstract "elder" an injustice. If so we are sorry, and beg his eldership's pardon. Still before receiving our sentence we desire to call attention to the fact that while speaking in the former address of the bishop and his cabinet this statement was made in compliment of presiding elders: —

In this cabinet the temptations come especially to presiding elders. In saying that some of these brethren are unselfish, pious, and hard-working men, is saying only what all know to be true.

We have wondered, my brethren, why all our presiding elders did not, without hesitation, classify themselves among this number of elect souls if conscientiously they could do so. It was their privilege; some of the elders whose letters are before us are not harmed and find no fault at all with the charges that we have made. Why should any one have been disturbed? We mentioned no names and designated no presiding elder's district.

But we are not alone in the opinion that *some* presiding elders have yielded to the extraordinary temptations to which they are exposed, and that no "elder" should be continued in office too long, and that pastors rather than presiding elders should be our General Conference representatives. In a recent article in *Zion's Herald*, March 16, the Hon. John J. Perry employs these words: —

Presiding elders are presumed to be able men and loyal to the church, but it is not the "best thing" to have too many of them in the General Conference. In their official capacity they are too far removed from the people. It is about time the pastorate should be advanced to the front, and at least a fair portion of delegates taken fresh from the churches.

There may be no danger in New England from continuing presiding elders for several years in office, but in the Baltimore Conference, of March ninth, a memorial was adopted by a large majority, asking the presiding bishop (Foster) not to appoint as presiding elder any minister who had previously held that office.

And at the regular weekly meeting of the Methodist preachers of Baltimore, March fourteenth, the Rev. N.

F. Rice, speaking of the bishop and presiding elder, made use of this remarkable language:—

> What responsibility has the presiding elder? None. Yet he is the man who is chosen to come between the minister and the bishop, and there is a secret meeting. He stabs you and me, my brethren, in the back, without having the courage to come forward and say so, or even the manhood to come to us and invite us in, so that we can defend ourselves like men.
>
> I tell you, my brethren, in that secret chamber, plots are laid and carried out to ruin the reputation and character of the minister, by the presiding elder, while the bishop muzzles them by "Don't you say anything about this." There is no law in the church that allows the bishop thus to muzzle the elder, but it is the practice that has been in vogue for years and is carried out to the very letter. I heard of a secret meeting that went on some six years ago, in this self-appointed cabinet that, should I expose it now, would be a very bombshell in your midst. At that meeting charges were laid against me by a presiding elder, and I never heard of it until Saturday last. Just to think, for six years this charge has been laid against me, yet I never heard of it until now. They did not have the moral courage to appeal to my manhood, but sat there in that dark, secret chamber, and like cowards hatched up this plot to stab me, while the bishop sat and listened, and then said: "Don't say anything. Unless there is some change in the policy of the church in regard to this, as well as other things, there will come a revolution in the ministry."
>
> In reporting the meeting the writer says, "Mr. Rice was frequently interrupted by applause from the seventy-five ministers, which showed that all were in sympathy with him; and remarks of "That's true," "You are right," could be heard from all parts of the room.

Before concluding this address we beg leave to call attention to criticisms from one or two sources on the remedies which were suggested by us for the purifying of our church from the evils of clerical politics. They are said by our critics to be inadequate and impracticable.

We supposed our design would be apparent, which was the proposing of certain measures that should be adopted for the purpose of immediate reform, not necessarily for perpetual use; reference to the address will show clearly the intention. Still some of the suggestions, as all must admit, are far reaching and should be kept constantly before our people. The proposition, for instance, to introduce more of the democratic element into our church affairs was meant to have a more varied and far more radical application than our critics appear to have imagined. For their benefit we will now make the application intended, and do this interrogatively and in the name of political reform.

And first we ask, Why should not the office of presiding elder be abolished altogether? then increase the number of districts in each Conference, each district being allowed to select a president who shall be stationed like other preachers, but who shall give a part of his time to the work now done by presiding elders? This change would diminish the political importance of "the elder," and introduce the democratic element into our church management where it is thought to be much needed.

Again, why, if the office of presiding elder is to be continued, must these men be appointed by the bishop? Why should the clergy and the laity have no voice except the humble, and often unavailing, right of petition in the selection of those who are to govern the affairs of the district? All this is clearly undemocratic. If we are to have presiding elders at all let them be elected by the joint vote of the laymen and preachers

of the several districts which they are to serve. This would be far less objectionable than the present method, and save us from certain political complications now existing.

Again, why should the stewards of our church constitute essentially a self-perpetuating body whose election is made to depend on the nomination of the pastor? This is manifestly undemocratic and opens the way to an abuse of clerical power. Let the stewards be elected by the assembled brotherhood of the church; this must be done if we would have our Methodism conform to the spirit of our republican institutions. It is too late in the ages to exclude the great body of our pious and intelligent laymen from all voice in the selection of those who are to manage their own church affairs. Is it replied that they have a voice? They have not a voice except as they resort to measures that are out of harmony with the spirit and letter of the discipline of our church as it now stands.

With the existing condition of things in the particulars above specified, and in other particulars that could be mentioned, our intelligent laymen are almost universally dissatisfied. We have scores of letters expressing in the most emphatic terms this dissatisfaction. The following is representative:—

DEAR BROTHER,—

The West confirms the statement that a large number of efficient laymen have gone from the Methodist Church into other communions. This is true of Chicago, of Aurora, of Ottawa, and other Western cities. Three men, not long ago members of the Methodist Church with which I am connected, are now officials in a church of another denomination on the same street. The real reason is as you state, "There is not the least part of lay representation." Our civil government gives the people a voice in town, county, city, state, and national affairs and in every secular enterprise in which they are interested. Our Church, in harmony with the times, must give its people a voice in its affairs or business men will march out more and more into other churches. They will not sit in silence and pay the millions without a voice in the enterprises that demand the millions.

The rank and file out West say agitate clerical politics; no more bishops; no more officers elected by General Conference; democratize the Methodist Church. Facts out West justify and demand just such bold, strong statements as are in your excellent address.

My brethren, we do not believe that the intelligent laymen of our church who give thought to these subjects, will rest in quietness until a constitutional convention with a degree of legislative power is called in which they shall have equal rights and representation with clergymen.

In time to come the two and a quarter millions of Methodists will demand rights now denied. The three thousand who now hold in their hands the power to obstruct any measure deemed of advantage to the church, must be shorn of that absolutism. The next General Conference on account of its immense opportunities, will be one of the most important and crucial sessions ever known in the history of our church.

But returning to our questions again, we ask, Why should lay representation in the General Conference continue to be the mere farce it now is? Either abolish it altogether, or else give laymen an equal voice with the clergy, either through equivalent numerical representation, increasing the number of laymen or decreasing the

number of clergymen, or else by a division of the clergy and laity into two separate houses, whose *concurrent* action will be required in order to secure the passage of any measure affecting the general welfare of the church. We do not see what satisfaction there can be to our laymen on the floors of General Conference when they know that if not in harmony with the clergy they are practically powerless.

We ask, furthermore, why office-holders or appointees of the General Conference are permitted to be active members of that body? This is manifestly an impropriety.

"The United States Constitution expressly excludes from Congress every holder of office. If necessary or proper for the United States Government, with its three branches, how much more so for our church, which has but one body and that one exercising all functions, legislative, judicial, and administrative? Imagine the United States Congress to consist of the Senate only, with full and exclusive governmental powers, and then the secretary of the interior as a member of it serving as chairman of the committee on Indian affairs and making reports on his own administration for the preceding quadrennium. Yet our church witnessed in 1884 Dr. Hartzell as chairman of committee on Freedman's Aid Work doing that very thing."

Exclude, therefore, every office-holder and employee of the General Conference from the deliberations of that body, except when called there to furnish such information as the Conference desires. This change would reduce amazingly the clerical politics of our church

and would enable the clergymen who are at the head of the purely secular enterprises of the church, where they ought not to be, and at the head of affairs wholly or partly ecclesiastical, where legitimately they may remain, more time to attend to the important interests committed to their care.

And why should not church papers be conducted by private corporations independent of official patronage and dictation, and why should not book agencies be managed by laymen who have been trained in these secular affairs? Does any one acquainted with the book publishing business doubt that the expenses of our Book Concern would be greatly reduced and that the profits would be greatly augmented under expert management, we are not speaking against the present agents in business tact, none of their clerical predecessors, perhaps, have surpassed them, or does any one acquainted with our church affairs doubt that temptations to clerical politics would be diminished by such changes in our several publishing interests as we have proposed?

And does any one doubt, if our bishops were elected merely as superintendents, with a limited term of office, say ten years, the appointment being to one field, as now is the case with Bishops Taylor and Thoburn, each bishop being held responsible for the work done in his field, that there would be less lust for the office of bishop and consequently less of political strife to gain the now enviable, life tenure position? But, my brethren, while all these questions enter more or less largely into the realm of clerical politics, and while some of the

modifications proposed would reduce existing evils, yet we venture to say that those who complained because what was proposed in the former address was inadequate and impracticable, will now raise hand and voice against one or all of these specific propositions because they are revolutionary. Indeed, we shall not be surprised if the cry is heard, "Professor Townsend is disloyal; he is no Methodist; what he says is heresy." Is it heresy? Then we repeat it all with emphasis!

O shade of John Wesley! appear to our timid ones and say to all our people: "It is loyalty to Methodism to obey the discipline as it is; and that it is none the less loyalty to Methodism, in the truest sense, and in all legitimate ways, to make the discipline, in the evolution of the ages, what it *ought* to be."[5]

But before closing, we must call attention to the fact that our plea in behalf of young men of ability who have had both a liberal and professional education, and who in some instances have had no inconsiderable experience in the work of the ministry, and could easily command excellent positions and compensation in other denominations, is one of the parts of our address that has received a measure of criticism.

The burden of that criticism is that the policy recommended by us would work injury to our elderly men, who, it is claimed, having had for their services but small compensation, and having spent the vigor of their manhood in the ministry, are now entitled to good appointments, though they are not asked for, or desired.

Indeed, it is the boast of some who are in authority that such demands of the church and such recognition of

the young men will be resolutely and systematically disregarded. In justification of this course, it is urged furthermore by those in authority that a favorable recognition of the desires of our churches for young men, when elderly men are in the field, is contrary to the prevailing policy of Methodism from the beginning of its history.

Now, my brethren, we may be stepping on perilous ground, but up to this moment having survived previous hazards of this sort we venture the assertion even in the face of all the criticism presented by the opposition, and without any form of apology, that if it is the policy of our church to ignore the judgments and desires of the laity, either in these or in other matters in which the laity of necessity have an interest, it is a mistaken policy; and if persisted in, sooner or later will cause a rebellion, or a revolution in the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Whoever thinks that ecclesiastical importance, arrogancy or tyranny will long be endured by a laity continually increasing in intelligence and wealth, is ignorant of the signs of the times and of the spirit of the age.

It is questionable if there has been an Annual Conference of late years, of any considerable size, in which the democratic spirit of the laity has not been in repeated antagonism with the monarchical spirit of the appointing power; and the appointing power, as everybody knows, is yielding more and more to the prevailing democratic tendency. Indeed, had not this been the case there would have been far more withdrawals from our lay membership than the many, who by their going already have caused us grief.

We should bear in mind, too, that it is not Wesleyan to cleave to any policy simply because it is venerable with age; but *it is* Wesleyan, as well as Scriptural, to cast aside the old bottle when not in condition for holding the new wine.

Now let us speak a word or two as to our elderly preachers. In the matter of cherishing a kindly feeling towards these men we allow no one to stand in advance of us. These preachers in their declining years should be abundantly provided for. But our plea is that the provision should not be made in the way proposed by those who would force the ministrations of these aged men upon an unwilling people. Such a procedure in more than one instance has proved an unkindness to both preacher and people.

What provisions for them can be made? you ask. We wish there were time to discuss here certain plans that long since should have been adopted by our church. Perhaps the importance of the subject justifies in this connection a word or two. In some instances these elderly men might be appointed as either *associate* or *assistant* pastors. Dual pastorates are coming to be, in our large appointments, a necessity. If the appointing powers will adopt a wise policy, our churches gladly will welcome and easily can afford to support such pastorates. There is now before the public a suggestive statement: —

No other Protestant denomination has increased so rapidly of late years in New York City as the Episcopalian. And this is a fact that deserves special notice. As we look down their alphabetical list we find such facts as these: All Angels' Church has three ministers; Ascension has four; Calvary has three; Grace has four; St. Mary the Virgin has four; Trinity Church has three; Zion has three. Several of these churches, notably Trinity, have numerous chapels and schools, which have other ministers and teachers.

But it is not so with our Methodist churches. Our largest churches have nominally but one pastor. It matters not whether it be a church of fifty members or one of two thousand. The one salaried man must make as many visits as any physician, as many pleas as any lawyer, and write as many pages as the most voluminous author. The doing of all this well is impossible. Here, therefore, is a field — that of an associate pastorate — in waiting for the men whose years are somewhat against them for the full responsibilities of parish and pulpit work.

But this is not the only provision that can be made for these worthy ministers of our church. They wisely could be appointed to churches of moderate requirements, receiving their salary in part, if need be, from a Conference fund provided for that purpose. If every preacher, say of twenty years' standing in the Methodist ministry, were assured of an annual salary of not less than eight hundred dollars, there would be inaugurated an era of comfortable assurance and good-will, where now, on the part of our ministry, are apprehensions as to support, and where on the part of the laity are sometimes contentions and bitterness.[6]

But there is still another way in which we can at least show our kindly feeling towards these men, and give them merited recognition and encouragement — a way that will test cleverly the sincerity of our professions.

It is said that these men have had experience in the workings of Methodism; that they have endured heroic labors; that they are wise in their judgments; that in many respects they never were better qualified to render valuable service for the church than they are to-day; and that their only misfortune is their age.

Now every point as to the worthiness of these men we readily and cheerfully concede. And more than that, we will measure our love for these elderly brethren with that of any presiding elder who crowds out a young man and angers a church in order to provide appointment for a man who is not desired, and we will test that love by a measure that we beg our Conference to approve and help consummate at its approaching session. That is, we shall place on our ballot for delegates to the approaching General Conference the names of these wise and valuable men whose election, in these days of ecclesiastical corruption, would lift our Conference at once above the scandal that now beclouds it; this, too, will be loyalty to these worthy men, while some of our talk *may* be loyalty, or may be nothing but a bid for votes.

We challenge any one to offer a valid objection to this measure. We challenge all those who have boasted of their loyalty to our veteran preachers now to show their regard by a magnanimous act rather than by inexpensive talk; and lastly, we challenge those who pretend to be jealous for the fair name of Methodism, and who have censured us for making public the corrupt practices of some of our preachers, to establish beyond question their unselfish devotion to our church by conforming to the New Testament system of ethics, preferring these venerable men to themselves, and giving them without hesitation the unobstructed right of way to the approaching General Conference. By supporting this single measure not a little will be done towards silencing the carper and the critic.

Our New England Conferences in their approaching sessions, as they seem to us, have the opportunity of showing to the world that they can rise above all suspicion of wrong doing. Our approaching General Conference has the opportunity of extorting from the world the confession that Methodism has abundant strength to free herself from all political craft. The Methodist Church at large has the opportunity in the immediate future of listening to the far grander confession that her religious faith and her reconstructed polity, when in consecrated hands, have through and in Christ everything essential for a world's redemption.

O Church of the millions, take courage! Not all within thy temple are making of it a house of merchandise. Thy trailing banner has space for engraving on it victories yet to come, greater than those of the past! Flexible in nonessentials, most *in*flexible in essentials; in doctrine remaining the same, in polity conforming to the spirit of a new order of things, is what your broad-minded founder would pray you might be. O Church of the Reformers! church of the Fathers! church of *our* fathers! church of the circuit preacher, — whose library was the Bible and hymn book, whose home was a saddle, whose throne of rough pine stood often in stables and open fields. Church of the self-denying,

toiling, consecrated winner of souls for the Redeemer! O church of God's planting, come back freed from every stain, come back! — the troubled and sorrowing world hath need of thee.[7]

APPENDIX.

of laying before your meeting certain evidence in my possession relating to "Clerical Politics."

Very truly and respectfully yours,

L. T. TOWNSEND.

BOSTON, MASS., Feb. 29, 1892.

NOTE II (page 103).

There has been a strong desire expressed for the publication of the thirteen letters to which reference was made in the address of April fourth. We yield to this desire in part. As before said we have excluded from our New England correspondence all communications that refer to the presiding elders now in Boston and vicinity. We exclude from the thirteen letters those whose introduction, if read in full, might affect in certain particulars the action of our Conference the coming week.

The first communication in this class from which we make extracts, is from a Boston University graduate, and a member of one of the New England Conferences, who is doing excellent work, who has suffered from the tyranny of "rings" and who has been sorely tempted to leave our ministry:—

February 11, 1892.

MY DEAR BROTHER:—I have been reading your address this morning. I am glad you have spoken out so loud. You do not in that address tell half the story as I see it and have seen it during the years I have been in this Conference. At the last election of delegates to General Conference I was offered help as to my appointment for my vote. This was by letter. The brother was very anxious for the election of a certain other brother. To such a proposition I refused to listen. There are things being done to-day for the coming election that would be a surprise if known. The Epworth League is being used to-day to further the ends of some. I feel sometimes that the Epworth League may be a curse rather than a blessing. More than one young man in the Conference has seriously considered the matter of leaving the Methodist Church. The treatment of some outside of a certain ring has been outrageously mean. Under these and other circumstances it is not strange we are tempted. Three times this year a change has been suggested to me by two denominations, each paying a great deal larger salary than I am now receiving. One of these is expecting a change soon, and the wish has been expressed to me concerning it. I do not wish to leave the home of my boyhood, for I love the Methodist Church and have so far refused any suggestion and offering made me by others.

The foregoing allusion to the Epworth League leads to the remark that we have seventeen extracts from Methodist preachers and laymen deploring the hostility of the "Epworth League" toward the "Society of Christian Endeavor," and showing the injury in some places that has resulted from this antagonism.

That our personal attitude in this matter may not be misunderstood we may say, that in one of the largest conventions held by the delegates of the Society of Christian Endeavor we spoke in as complimentary words of the Epworth League as the proprieties of the place would allow, praising its Christian work and its remarkable growth.

But in view of facts now before us we most earnestly implore those who are managing the affairs of the Epworth League to have the single purpose of using it for the upbuilding of Christian character among the young people of our church. If it is dragged down, (some persons think of necessity it will be) into the arena of either ecclesiastical or clerical politics it will become a mischief-maker and the Methodist Church will rue the day that the Epworth League Society was born.

A preacher against whom we never have heard an unkind word spoken, sends a letter from which we make these extracts: —

February 23, 1892.

MY DEAR DR. TOWNSEND: —

Ten thousand thanks for that timely article in *Zion's Herald* on "Clerical Politics." I have been in the work but a few years, but I have seen so much of it I am most heartily sick. If I could see you I would like to mention a few cases in this Conference. As doubtless you are receiving many letters of similar import, I will not write more now.

The following quotations are from a letter received from a preacher in one of our New England Conferences whom the Methodist Church well may honor: —

February 22, 1892.

DEAR DR. TOWNSEND: —

I want at this late date to thank you for your brave words before the Boston Minister's Meeting as published in the *Herald*. I read it with mingled gladness and sorrow; gladness because you were brave enough to say the things you did; sorrow, because you were but hinting at the real truth. I suppose I ought to be grateful for the kindness that Methodism has shown me; and I think I am. Still I have been greatly chagrined at the political maneuvring of which we have been guilty, and which seemed to blossom out so disgracefully in 1884, and that too among those scrambling for the highest office. Some of these things have tempted me terribly at times to seek some other communion. I cannot, I will not, become an "ecclesiastical politician" and so am often grieved.

A member of a New England Conference, who has his eyes open, who would scorn to do an unmanly thing, and whom the clerical politicians hardly would dare approach, writes thus: —

February 11, 1892.

REV. L. T. TOWNSEND, D.D.

Dear Brother, — Have just finished reading your essay in *Zion's Herald*. The battle is on and there will be revolution. Surely God is calling that the Methodist Church, so gloriously begun, end not ingloriously in the morning of her career. It is all true, awfully true! The impudence of the men who would constitute themselves lords of God's heritage makes me as mad as I ought to be. I am delighted at your treatment of them. Yes, let them be "stamped out," for we do not want to be made ashamed to be known as Methodists. The cunning foxes will say, "Prove your allegations"; as if any man or set of men among Methodist ministers could possibly earn the reputation of the clerical politician, if they were faithful and earnest servants of the Lord Jesus Christ! The *men* are known and their "report" is the growth of years before observant eyes. Do not retreat. We must make them feel the indignation of the church whose ministry they prostitute.

The letter from which we next quote, is from a former graduate of our university, an exceptionally able thinker and preacher, now a member of one of our New England Conferences: —

February 11, 1892.

REV. L. T. TOWNSEND, D.D., BOSTON, MASS.

My Dear Professor, — I have just read your article published in *Zion's Herald* on "Clerical Politics." I congratulate you on having put such an effectual period to the baseless complaints against yourself and the School of Theology that had gotten into cheap and anonymous circulation. And I congratulate you also on having so faithfully pointed out the real cause of the exodus of those excellent men from our ministry. It gives me the greater pleasure to do this from the fact that I discussed with you my own case not many months ago, and am able to remember how kindly you could advise with all loyalty to our own church, and at the same time help one to feel that the causes of unrest belonged in part at least, outside of one's self.

It is scarcely possible to emphasize too much the importance of reforming the tendency to intrigue.

The editorial disclaimer in *Zion's Herald* may cover a multitude of sins in so far as the outside public goes; but I do not think you impinged one whit too decidedly on the eldership. It is one thing for an elder to say he is sorry he cannot give a student any work, and quite another thing for him to turn away with an air that makes the student feel the elder considered it an impertinence in the student to ask him about work. And as to martyrdom, my dear professor, if any shall undertake to offer you up, it may be that enough of us are yet extant to discover some elder caught in some thicket who may be offered in your stead. Begging pardon for this intrusion, I am, gratefully yours.

A graduate of our Theological School, a man of marked ability, who quickly would be called to the pastorate of a Congregational church did he hold out to that denomination any encouragement writes thus:—

March 14, 1892.

MY DEAR PROF. TOWNSEND:—

Having supplied ——— church (one of the most important churches in the New England Conference), nine months, and having received a unanimous vote of the Quarterly Conference, in Dr.———'s presence (the presiding elder), to return the next year, I was greatly surprised upon meeting the Bishop at the Conference to be told by him: "I am not going to send you back to that church. You had no more right in that pulpit than any little boy from the street," — and this after he had been waited upon by at least five of the most influential members of the official board urgently requesting my return. The Bishop also asked me at that time if I intended leaving the Methodist Church, making the offensive suggestion that a small appointment might weaken my loyalty to the church of my fathers. I had reluctantly consented to return to the church I had served if appointed, and did consent *only because* refusal seemed ungrateful to my friends and the official board who had fought hard to retain me in opposition to the Presiding Elder's fiat.

Another fact in this letter, the publishing of which in this connection might be misinterpreted, we withhold for the present though the brother adds: "You are at liberty to use either or both these facts as you may deem best."

The letter from which we next quote is from a preacher in the New England Conference who has received nothing through reciprocity management though the opportunity of doing so more than once has been extended to him:—

March 2, 1892.

REV. LUTHER T. TOWNSEND, D.D.

My Dear Brother, — Do not reckon me so verdant as to imagine you need any endorsement or any encouragement from me. But I do say that the fluttering all along the branches most impressively betrays the fatal inerrancy of your shot. A "lie," is it, that presiding elders do personally solicit the votes of their brother ministers to help them into the General Conference? Upon my soul, I wish that it were! A brother in our Conference, an ex-presiding elder, whom you well know, wrote a letter to a pastor whom you equally well know, in which he as plainly asked that favor as it was possible to do it without using so many words. I was shown the letter and carefully read it. There was but one possible meaning. It was so intended and it was inevitably so interpreted by both the recipient and myself. That man was then in charge of one of our districts. The time was just before our Annual Conference and a General Conference was immediately to follow.

The general corrupt ring-manipulation in our Conference is perfectly scandalous. God help and speed you, my brother.

The next quotation we make is from a letter of a preacher well on in years, but a man of far more than ordinary ability. Should we repeat some of the facts he has brought to our attention, the ears of some of the members of our Conference would tingle:—

February 11, 1892.

MY DEAR DOCTOR:—

I have just read your recent address before the Boston Preach-

ers' Meeting for the second time. You have indeed wielded a trenchant blade of Damascus temper. Not a word too many. Not a word too severe; all true, all needed. Somewhat careful observation of fifty years confirms each statement. Happy, if the church will listen, digest, and *reform*. You may have signed your own death warrant, but if so, you will fall with your face to the foe. God bless you.

A member of one of our New England Conferences, a man of recognized ability and of consecrated life, sends us this somewhat startling communication:—

February 17, 1892.

DEAR DR. TOWNSEND:—

I have read with great interest your address before the Boston Preachers' Meeting. I am sure you deserve the hearty thanks of every minister and member of the Methodist Church. Certainly every minister will thank you if not a "politician." There will probably be a rumpus among the latter class; but you are right, and I hope you will go right on.

I supposed the —— Conference was somewhat peculiar in respect to "clerical politics," but from your paper I find that I was mistaken. If you ever need facts I can furnish them at any time. One minister in our Conference gave his presiding elder one hundred dollars to get him a transfer, and he did. I myself heard another bargaining with his presiding elder to send him to a certain place for a consideration of fifty dollars; the elder regretted that it was Monday morning and too late. One man was put into the presiding elder's office with the help of three other ministers who were to be *remembered* by said elder in certain ways then designated. They have been so *remembered*. I got these facts from two presiding elders at the time, and was curious to see whether the affair would turn out as they said it would six years ago. It has. Men are asked for by churches in this Conference, and the people of the churches tell them that they have asked for them, but they cannot be sent. And in some cases men so inferior have been sent that the churches have been disgusted, and, as soon as possible have got rid of them. One large church in our Conference desired to secure the services of a very able and successful pastor, but the then pastor of that church wished to exchange appointments with another minister, and so he went all around the parish and urged the people not to ask for the man they wished to have, for, said he, "He has a sick wife, and will not be able to look after the wants of his people." He is one of the men who is spoken of above as making a presiding elder, and of course that presiding elder carried out his little plan for him. I will give you the *names* of the parties if you desire them. Also all other like things, God bless you.

The following letter furnishes additional surprises, especially for the unsuspicious ones among us:—

February 24, 1892.

PROF. L. T. TOWNSEND, D.D.

Dear Brother,—It occurred to me, after reading the *Boston Herald* of yesterday, that you would appreciate a fact in my possession in the line of ecclesiastical politics. Perhaps you need no more facts to strengthen your cause, but I contribute the following:—

—— Years ago at our Annual Conference in ——, I was one day kindly invited by Brother ——, to meet on such an evening at the parsonage, at a gathering of some of the preachers. I was not given the least intimation as to the nature of the meeting, and supposed it some innocent social gathering.

I found there my presiding elder, Dr. ——, and a room full of preachers. Cake and ice cream were served free. The matter of General Conference delegates to be chosen the following morning was fully discussed. It was determined that printed ballots should be used, and that two or four persons, there and then chosen, should act as distributors in the several aisles of the church. The brethren present were not at all modest in taking places on the slate. Three, at least, of those present were to be presented on the ticket, possibly more. It was determined to put Dr. —— on the ticket (he was not in the ring), as the Conference would surely send him.

I hope, dear Professor, that you may be divinely guided in your utterances, and our church soon be rid of this pest. I am heartily sick of so much self-seeking among our ministers.

I have never thought that the trouble with our city Methodism was the time limit so much as this matter which you so vigorously, and none too much so, are handling.

We may add that a brother in the New England Conference, whose standing is among the foremost,

assures us that he has known of two caucuses, *with refreshments* (no *liquors* were allowed) to be held the same night by opposing factions, where ballots were prepared, as in the instances mentioned above.

A presiding elder in one Conference was once charged with being a party to one of these [midnight] political gatherings. He would not deny the fact, but said that the meeting was not a caucus [or a prayer meeting exactly], but was simply a meeting of friends for *consultation*.

An enterprising and as yet uncorrupted presiding elder, still in office, there are such, as we said in the former address, though one of the ablest of New England preachers once said that on no condition would he be a presiding elder for fear he should go to hell for that office, writes these words: —

February 11, 1892.

DEAR DR. TOWNSEND:—

I have just finished reading your most excellent and timely address. It is a bold stroke, but I believe a much needed one in many quarters. I thank you for it. It will do good I doubt not. I have not been a presiding elder long enough to learn all the things you strike at, but when I was a pastor in another Conference, I know this, that old men whom no one cared to hear, and a few young men who had brass, could get the best charges, while all others took the 'leavings.' The ring managed things as to who should go to General Conference, be editor of the *Pittsburgh Advocate*, etc., to the disgust and alienation of many. Let all the wire-pullers be given a back seat. I hope your words will have a reforming effect through our entire Methodism.

NOTE III (page 105).

In an adjoining state the following declaration of principles was recently adopted by a gathering of

Methodist preachers which all our Conferences might well adopt: —

Resolved (1), That we are fully convinced that the coming election for General Conference delegates demands of us a united and strenuous effort to break up all combinations for personal aggrandizement or political effect. (2), That we believe — and experience, we think, proves — that ambitious or scheming men in the great council of the church represent themselves rather than a constituency. (3), We believe that as a Conference we are capable of selecting our own representatives without the assistance or interference, direct or indirect, of persons who are self-constituted candidates, or of persons who are not members of our Conference. (4), That in choosing our representatives we repudiate "combinations" as between candidate and candidate. (5), That standing upon these principles we agree to lay aside our personal preferences and support for General Conference delegates a ticket wholly uncompromised in the particulars mentioned.

NOTE IV (page 121).

The following communication is from a member of one of the largest book-publishing firms in the western part of our country.

March 31, 1892.

DEAR SIR AND BROTHER: —

It occurs to me that I ought to give you two or three facts which are forcible pointers, and incontrovertible.

We see secretaries, editors, agents, running hither and thither, making speeches and shaking hands at Annual Conferences, ostensibly and professedly to promote the trusts committed to them. Is there *any business* sense in it? Manifestly, no! If there were, they would begin in the first year of their term and not wait *till its end*. But it is well known that more of that sort of "tramping-grass" is done by the office-holder (and seeker) in the *last year* before General Conference *than in all the other three*.

I am one of five partners engaged in book publishing, etc., with thirty-three years experience. We have not one-third as much *capital* as the West Book Concern, and the *details* of our

business are not one-fourth as many as theirs, and the men who operate that are *two in number*.

We *five* find it necessary to be on the spot and give *personal attention* every day.

If we want to collect outside accounts, we do it by correspondence. If to increase trade, we employ good men, and experienced, at salaries less than one-half that paid to the book agents of our church.

If there is a *collector* or *drummer* in the book trade, or any branch of it, who gets $3,500 a year and expenses, outside of Methodist circles, I have not seen him.

Again, at last General Conference, the missionary secretaries were authorized (or requested) to visit the Pacific Coast. When did they go? Just before their term expired!

In the late fall months, when all the Ohio and Kentucky Conferences were over, and annual collections had been reported, two of those secretaries (one of them twice) within sixty days, were hobnobbing about Cincinnati.

It would be interesting to know the amount of those "travelling expenses," especially in the last year of each quadrennium.

The Missionary Society, or Board, can and ought to boom its collections with printers' ink, and keep their secretaries at home for office-work.

This communication was referred to persons connected with one of the largest publishing houses in the eastern section of our country. They sustained without qualification the several points appearing in this paper now before us.

Note V (page 122).

The words of the Honorable John J. Perry, from whom we have already quoted, deserve attention: —

The Methodist Episcopal Church has always suffered more from the conservative than from the radical element. Reforms in church government, advance movements in church work, and improvements in church machinery, have always been persistently fought by the former until in many cases their hostility to "changes" has resulted in very serious losses to the denomination.

Note VI (page 125).

The way of saving many of our ministers to Methodism who are living on starvation salaries, being half the time on the borders of pecuniary disgrace, has been set forth in a thoughtful paper by the Rev. W. T. Johnson, of Round Pond, Maine, entitled "Dishonesty in Methodism." In the main his plan is to have a Conference fund that in our New England States shall secure to every preacher appointed by Conference a salary of at least six hundred dollars. This plan, it is thought, will retain in our church not a few men who feel they must leave us owing to an inadequate and precarious support. And it always has been our claim that when still further advanced in years the amplest provisions shall be made for the maintenance and comfort of these veterans of Methodism.

Note VII (page 128).

The following words from Stephen Merritt will be valued most by those who are best acquainted with him. They fittingly can be applied to other cities: —

The outlook for New York Methodism is cloudy. The people have lost heart and faith in the workings of present arrangements, and decline to furnish the sinews of war. Evangelical demagogism is seeking place among us, rings are seen in the near distance, cabals are formed, and unpleasantness, strife and unnecessary dissension prevail. Millions of dollars are idle because of no place where they can be confidently put. Religious capitalists will not invest in a falling market. Our people, finding not what they desire in our New York Methodism, are flocking elsewhere.

Clerical power rules for its own aggrandizement — not for souls, not for our beloved Methodism, but for self. The lines are fallen to us in dangerous places. We should be the strongest church in this city — we will soon be among the weakest. Fourth Avenue is the giant that toppled and fell, and now threatens to carry down three or four others in its fall. Old Seventh Street is tottering, and two or three more will go with it. Franklin Street — Madison Street are doomed. North New York has lifted her hands to give up her property, so that others may bear the burden. All the churches, save one or two, are living at a poor, dying rate, with no "aggressive Methodism," save a little quarterly. We have lost the power, have ignored the Holy Spirit, have hampered and hindered down-town work until it is gasping its last, and we cry, if a church cannot support a minister *well*, "It is of no use." The grand old church is permitted to die of inactivity, and woe be to the man who dares to speak in favor of zealous earnestness, as he brings the blush to others who desire to be at ease in Zion. I love New York Methodism as it should be. I despise it as it is growing to be. I have given my life to it — for it. Every dollar I have made has been freely lain upon her altars — every hour consecrated to her service. I dare stand for her in the hour of her peril, in the time of her discomfiture. I will not ask, Will it give me place, pleasure, preferment? I beg we return to the old lines — that we ask for the old paths and walk therein.

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